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**Recovering the Meaning of Baptism in Westminster
Calvinism in Critical Dialogue with Thomas F.
Torrance**

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Doctor of Philosophy
University of Edinburgh 2015

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and that the work herein contained is my own. I, furthermore, hereby indicate that this thesis does not include work submitted for any other academic degree or professional qualification

Signed

Rev Dr John Andrew Scott

January 2015

Abstract

This thesis examines and critiques the doctrine of baptism in the theology of Thomas Torrance and utilises aspects of Torrance's doctrine to recover and enrich the meaning of baptism in Westminster theology. Torrance's doctrine of baptism has suffered from misunderstanding and has been widely neglected. This arises from Torrance introducing a new soteriological paradigm, that is claimed by Torrance, to be both new, and at the same time to be a recovery of the work of the early church fathers and Calvin. It is the contention of this thesis that Torrance's soteriological paradigm is more 'new' than it is a recovery of either the early church fathers or Calvin. Torrance's new paradigm is not easily identified as 'new' because of Torrance's creative use of Irenaeus, Athanasius and Calvin. His theology is further misunderstood by many because it is partly seen to derive from his criticism of a caricature of Westminster theology.

The purpose here is to provide an exposition of Torrance's doctrine of baptism, identifying union with Christ and Christ's vicarious humanity as key doctrines that inform his theology of baptism. Torrance has a distinct and unique soteriological paradigm based on an ontological healing in the incarnation. He refers to this as a 'dimension in depth' where the atonement takes place from the virgin birth through to the ascension, where the work of Christ is the person of Christ. It will be argued that Torrance exaggerates the degree to which his views may be found in the early church fathers and in Calvin. It is also suggested that many of his criticisms of Westminster theology have some basis, but that his detailed arguments diminishes his more valid general criticisms. The thesis identifies Torrance's distinct voice from the early church fathers and Calvin and attempts to dismiss Torrance's caricature of Westminster theology, so that Torrance's distinct soteriology can be recognised, his genuine criticisms of Westminster theology considered, and the contribution that he has made on baptism be recovered.

The doctrine of baptism that emerges from incorporating many of Torrance's insights is a reformed covenantal doctrine of baptism that stresses the importance of ontological union for covenantal solidarity, but will reject Torrance's redemptive understanding of ontological healing. Torrance centres the meaning of baptism in Christ and Christ's one vicarious baptism for the church, and serves to identify how the church has lost its focus on what lies at the centre of baptism.

However Torrance's doctrine of baptism that argues for the theological primacy of infant baptism lost the debate in the Church of Scotland, which now places a greater emphasis on adult baptism. It is suggested that the reasons for this failure is that Torrance's doctrine of baptism was developed outside of the framework of covenant theology, and that his doctrine of soteriology on which his doctrine of baptism was based left little room for the human response.

The thesis concludes that Torrance's doctrine of baptism can serve as a model for the recovery of the meaning of baptism. While the central thrust of Torrance's redemptive ontological union with Christ is rejected, Torrance's emphasis on union with Christ, the incarnation, the person and work of Christ, and Christ's vicarious baptism can be incorporated into the reformed doctrine of baptism to recover its meaning.

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Acknowledgements

It was not the initial intention to write a thesis engaging with Torrance's doctrine of baptism. The original idea was to concentrate on the much broader topic of an eschatological approach to the sacrament of baptism. I was wisely encouraged by my first supervisor Dr John McDowell to narrow the focus of the work to a single scholar on the subject of baptism. The eschatological interest was difficult to relinquish and initial thoughts contemplated utilising the works of Jürgen Moltmann and Meredith Kline. As a part time student the advice given was to choose a scholar whose first language was English. Being already familiar with Torrance's work on the trinity, Torrance seemed the natural choice. I am indebted to Dr John McDowell for pointing me in this direction.

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Introduction

Thomas F. Torrance is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest theologians in the English speaking world of the twentieth century. Heavily influenced by Karl Barth, but no mere Barthian, Torrance in his own right commands a place of prominence among twentieth century theologians.

The young Torrance was captivated by Schleiermacher's architectonic approach to theology.¹ Torrance's lifelong quest was to develop his own architectonic approach to theology but in doing so escape the subjectivism that he found in Schleiermacher. Torrance was born of missionary parents and from them inherited an evangelistic zeal that can be seen surfacing quite frequently in his writings. Also evident in his writings is that he is never far from doxology and he always seeks to draw his readers into doxology. He has had a very broad area of interest throughout his academic career and on into his retirement. He has had an interest in the early church fathers, Calvin, Barth, the sacraments, the incarnation, the trinity and the relationship between theology and science.

Torrance demonstrates the ability to be able to survey centuries of theological thought and to identify trends, and to notice when the church has neglected vital areas of theology because of their preoccupation with the polemics of their day.

Out of a long productive career Torrance gave considerable attention to the study of the sacraments. In fact Torrance, in his preface to his devotions as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1976, says that his own confession of faith is 'bound up in the Nicene Creed and the Eucharistic Liturgy.'²

The importance of the sacraments to Torrance is expressed in his comments:

The two Sacraments of the Gospel enshrine together the two essential 'moments' of our participation in the new creation, while we are still implicated in the space and time of this passing world. Baptism is the Sacrament of our once and for all participation in Christ, and may be spoken of as the Sacrament of Justification, which is not repeated. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our continuous participation in Christ, and may be spoken of as the Sacrament of Sanctification, which is regularly to be repeated, until Christ comes again. They thus express in their togetherness the core of the ontological relation which we have within the crucified, risen and ascended Lord.³

¹ Donald K. McKim, *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 52.

² Thomas F. Torrance, *The Centrality of Christ: Devotions and Addresses [at] the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1976).

³ Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1976), p. 150.

Torrance's eucharistic theology has been explored by a number of authors. Agnew considered the concept of sacrifice in the eucharistic theology of D.M. Baillie, T.F. Torrance and Jean-Jacques von Allmen.⁴ The most in-depth study of Torrance's eucharistic theology has been by Stamps in 1986 later published in 2007.⁵ Stamps acknowledges the inseparability of baptism and the eucharist in Torrance's sacramental theology. However he is only able to deal with the eucharist and comments that, 'we have to recognise that the former (baptism) is deserving of an entirely separate but equally rigorous study.'⁶

To date Torrance's doctrine of baptism has not received any major attention apart from short journal articles or a chapter in a compendium of topics.⁷ Torrance spent ten years as convenor of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism and from that work flowed a number of his major publications.⁸

The Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism was a ten year project that produced a huge volume of research into the doctrine and history of baptism and to date this material lies buried in the reports of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. A browse of the publications on baptism over the past six decades shows that in many cases Torrance has not even merited a footnote. This neglect of Torrance on baptism seems incongruous given the extent of the research and the reputation of the scholar. This neglect of Torrance demands some investigation.

Torrance was a robust defender of infant baptism and saw infant baptism as having primacy for the theology and practice of baptism. This was certainly against the trend, where the thought in European Reformed Churches seemed to be favouring adult baptism.⁹ Torrance's mentor Karl Barth was one of the loudest objectors to infant baptism. This might explain the neglect of Torrance's doctrine of baptism by

⁴ Mary B. Agnew, *The Concept of Sacrifice in the Eucharistic Theology of Donald M. Baillie, Thomas F. Torrance, and Jean-Jacques von Allmen* (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1972).

⁵ Robert J. Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh: The Eucharistic Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2007).

⁶ Ibid., p xiv.

⁷ Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 262ff; Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance : Theologian of the Trinity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 287ff; George Hunsinger, 'The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments' in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2001), pp. 139ff.

⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Order and Disorder*, 2 vols., vol. 1. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959); Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, 2 vols., vol. 2, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960); Thomas F. Torrance, *The School of Faith. The Catechisms of the Reformed Church. Translated and Edited with an Introduction by T. F. Torrance* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1959).

⁹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Faith and Order Paper No. 111*, (Geneva: paper presented at the World Council of Churches, 1982).

the followers of Barth, but others, especially those from the Westminster reformed tradition who sought to defend the primacy of infant baptism have also ignored Torrance's work on the subject. Torrance was a severe critic of Westminster theology. Given his criticism of Westminster theology and also the fact that Westminster theologians largely viewed Barth, and by association Torrance, through the lens of Van Til's criticism of Barth, Westminster theologians had no desire to explore assistance from his direction. If judgement has already been passed on Torrance's theology of baptism can it serve any useful purpose to bring to light Torrance's neglected doctrine of baptism?

The present work will identify Torrance as a useful and helpful critic of Westminster theology. Torrance was a critic more of liberal theology than he was of Westminster theology and there is a sense that his criticism of Westminster theology arose out of a frustration, because he believed that it was blind to liberal theology, and that it did not have arguments that were robust enough to engage with liberal theology. Westminster theologians today may not have embraced Torrance's doctrine but they are certainly engaged in discussion on subjects that Torrance has drawn attention to and has accused them of neglecting. Positive considerations on the doctrine of the trinity, the incarnation, union with Christ and the eucharist are taking place and Torrance has played his part in placing these doctrines back on the agenda.

This thesis will propose that what has been lost in baptism is its meaning and that Torrance's work on baptism can help the church at large, but in particular that part of the church that follows the Westminster tradition, recover the meaning of baptism. The meaning of baptism has been squandered and lost in the preoccupation with the debate to establish whether adult baptism or infant baptism is the correct expression of baptism. While Torrance defends infant baptism as the primary baptism for the church, more than anything else he seeks to bring out the meaning of baptism by linking it closely with Christology and soteriology.

In the May 1960 report of the Special Commission on Baptism to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland Torrance criticises Westminster theology for the misplaced focus on the doctrine of baptism.¹⁰ Schmemann has also lamented the loss of the meaning of baptism. 'Controversies raging concerning the form of baptism are centred almost exclusively on the issue of validity rather than upon the issue of

¹⁰ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1960).

meaning or essence.’¹¹ The loss of the liturgy of baptism, argues Schmemann, has led to the loss of the meaning of baptism, resulting in the loss of piety. The meaning of baptism, he says is related to the death and resurrection of Christ. When baptisms took place at Easter, each Easter was a reminder of one’s baptism. This forceful reminder of baptism led to personal piety. *The Larger Catechism* encourages personal piety through emphasising the need to improve on one’s baptism. Martin Luther argued for a daily pious practice, speaking of living in the good of one’s baptism through a spiritual daily baptism, a dying daily and daily walking in newness of life.¹²

This thesis demonstrates how the meaning of baptism can be recovered through the clear focus that Torrance places on the person and work of Christ and his presentation of an objective baptism; one baptism common to Christ and the church. The thesis will identify Torrance’s unique soteriological paradigm which shapes his doctrine of baptism and distinguishes this paradigm from Westminster theology’s paradigm. A theology of baptism using the Westminster paradigm will be outlined incorporating some aspects of Torrance’s theology. The traditionally reformed view for the purposes of this discussion is the view that broadly subscribes to *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and *The Three Forms of Unity*.¹³ The Westminster tradition has many voices and not all agree. The strand of the Westminster tradition referred to in this thesis is Reformed Orthodox Federal Theology generally represented by the authors of *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*.¹⁴

Torrance’s theology is of a holistic nature and to consider one aspect of his theology requires a consideration of every other aspect of his theology.¹⁵

¹¹ Alexander Schmemann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1976).

¹² Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, http://oll.libertyfund.org/EBooks/Luther_0387.pdf. Luther Babylonian Captivity. Accessed 28 September 2007.

¹³ Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.

¹⁴ Ligon Duncan, (ed.) *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2003). The Westminster Confession into the Twenty-First Century discusses, from numerous vantage points, the Westminster theology in its interrelationship to the earlier reformed tradition. It argues for a basic continuity between Calvin and Calvinism, without ignoring developments and issues that have been developed into discontinuities. Although Bavinck is from the Dutch Reformed (Gereformeerd) tradition, he will be used to represent the Reformed (i.e. Westminster) tradition on baptism as he refers favourably to the Westminster Confession of Faith on baptism in Herman Bavinck, *Saved by Grace: The Holy Spirit’s Work in Calling and Regeneration*, trans Nelson D. Kloosterman, ed. J. Mark Beach (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), p. 65.

¹⁵ ‘No part of Christian dogmatics can be discussed adequately or with intelligent understanding without adequate reference to the whole...’ T. F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), p. 2. Jewett says that ‘the debate over infant baptism is one out of which come implications involving the whole range of theology.’ Paul King Jewett, *Infant Baptism*

A plausible argument could be made to suggest that the sacrament of baptism is the central theme in Torrance's theology. Stamps¹⁶ has proposed that the eucharist lies at the heart of Torrance's theology and yet others¹⁷ have suggested that union with Christ is the central theme. The incarnation, the knowledge of God, the trinity, or the *homoousion* could also compete to be acknowledged as central, or organising themes in Torrance's works. The claims need not be considered contradictory. Torrance sets forth a kaleidoscopic view of theology. Through the viewfinder the observer can identify all the individual pieces of glass representing the individual elements of Torrance's theology, but they all combine to present a unified picture. To consider any specific theme such as baptism, the tube is turned and the elemental themes are rearranged with baptism at the centre but seen in relation to all the other elements. To analyse Torrance's theology piece by piece is to run the risk of dismantling the kaleidoscope thus losing the beauty of the whole and misunderstanding the isolated themes as they lose some of their meaning by not being viewed in their context within the whole.¹⁸ The doctrine of baptism in the theology of Torrance, because of the perichoretic interplay of each doctrine with every other doctrine, will serve as a useful means to grasp, if not the whole of Torrance's theology, at least the major themes. While it is not the primary purpose of this study to set forth the whole of Torrance's theology it is a necessity to grasp the whole theological paradigm in order to understand the role that baptism plays within that wider theology.

So the task here is to summarise Torrance's understanding of baptism with the awareness that this can only really be accomplished with reference to his theological or soteriological paradigm.

In his presentation of his theology of baptism Torrance identifies what he considers is wrong with the traditional views of baptism and again, in his view, is also wrong with the whole of theological thinking going right back to the early church. Torrance indicates that a persistent commitment to dualism has produced an

and the Covenant of Grace: An Appraisal of the Argument That as Infants Were Once Circumcised, So They Should Now Be Baptized (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 1.

¹⁶ Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh*.

¹⁷ Kye Won Lee, *Living in Union with Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*, vol. 11 (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2003); Habets fits into this category though he presents the central theme of Theosis and relates this to union with Christ. Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁸ However, 'one has to start somewhere; he cannot relate everything to everything else all at once, for otherwise he would be God.' John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1987), p. 10.

industry of theology that is problematic because it is merely a construction based on incorrect initial assumptions.¹⁹

Chapter One considers both the general and specific influences that help to shape Torrance's doctrine of baptism. Three categories of baptism are identified, namely baptismal regeneration, symbolic baptism and instrumentalism. The Roman Catholic Church is selected to represent the category of baptismal regeneration, Zwingli to represent the symbolical view and Calvin to represent instrumentalism. Torrance rejects baptismal regeneration and symbolism but surprisingly says little about Zwingli in his historical survey. Given the timing of Barth's announcement of his Zwinglianism this neglect by Torrance is puzzling. Torrance gives ample space to Calvin's instrumentalist view and clearly wishes to be seen within this tradition. However Torrance is quite critical of Westminster theology, that would also want to see itself as successors of Calvin's theology of baptism. A second important point that is noted in considering the general influences is how the doctrine of baptism is closely connected to the soteriology in each category of baptism. Indeed what makes baptism such a controversial issue is its close relationship to soteriology.

Three specific influences on Torrance's theology are then considered, the liturgical renewal movement, the ecumenical movement, and Barth and Barth's changing views on baptism. Torrance was an honorary president of the Church Service Society and was involved in editing a *Manual of Church Doctrine* and the 1962 *Ordinal and Service Book*.²⁰ While Torrance was involved in liturgical renewal and saw himself as influenced by the Eastern Church Fathers he never really embraced their approach to liturgy and his involvement with editing liturgy was to ensure that his incarnational theology was reflected in that liturgy.

¹⁹ Morrison says that the opposition to dualism must be understood as the background against which Torrance presents his realist knowledge of God in Christ. Dualism is the explanation that Torrance gives for why theologians and philosophers ended up with anthropology rather than theology. John Douglas Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997). Colyer says that 'Torrance's holistic approach leads him into sharp conflict with ancient and modern forms of dualism.' Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, p. 57. As Torrance's writing career progresses the problem of dualism becomes more prominent in his thought. There is only brief mention of dualism in the Auburn lectures. In 1941 Torrance identifies three major streams in the history of religious thought: 1. The Philosophical-Theological Stream, 2. The Moral-Religious Stream, and 3. The Historical-Experiential Stream. Each stream asks the question: 'How can a human being know God?' To which there are two fundamental answers 1. The Hebrew and Christian answer and 2. The Greek and Pagan Answer. In these major papers Torrance does not deal with dualism. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Modern Theological Debate*, in *Theological Students' Prayer Union* (Bewdley: Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions, 1941). In his doctoral thesis Torrance refers to a dualism between 'is' and 'ought' – between the indicative and the imperative. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1948), p. 134.

²⁰ 'Record,' *The Church Service Society* (1983).

The ecumenical movement became the driver that propelled Torrance to work beyond the scope of what the Special Commission on Baptism was charged with. Over a ten year period Torrance, as convenor of the special commission, gave a longer answer to a broader question to a more ecumenical audience than just the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Barth's influence on Torrance and his changing views on baptism constantly play in the background of Torrance's work as both relate baptism to their incarnational theology. Torrance used Barth's incarnational theology, but unlike Barth, used it to defend a sacramental view of infant baptism. This gave rise to tension between Barth and Torrance which becomes clear in some personal communication between the two.

Chapter Two describes Torrance's doctrine of baptism. Some questions are raised about Torrance's baptism and these are taken up in critical response in Chapter Four.

Chapter Three explores Torrance's ten year role as convenor of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism. The survey goes beyond Torrance's period to note how the Church of Scotland placed a greater focus on adult baptism than had previously been given. This chapter considers the reports, the reactions to the reports and the exchanges in the General Assembly. Torrance sent at least two reports to Barth and some personal correspondence between Barth and Torrance on the commission's report is considered. The written responses from the presbyteries to the commission were not consulted in this research.

Chapter Four critiques Torrance's doctrine of baptism. In the course of the exposition of Torrance's doctrine of baptism two key doctrines are identified as essential for understanding Torrance's doctrine of baptism. These two doctrines are union with Christ and human participation in Christ. Particular attention will be given to the objective/subjective tension associated with Torrance's doctrine of human participation in Christ. Before considering these two doctrines attention is given to Torrance's teaching on the *homoousion*, *hypostatic union* and the *anhypostatic* and *enhypostatic* couplet. The chapter then explores the barriers that make it difficult to identify Torrance's unique contribution to the doctrine of baptism. Torrance's use of Irenaeus and Athanasius is considered to establish the need for separating out the voice of Torrance from the early church fathers because Torrance creatively uses their ideas, but in his presentation the reader can easily mistake the voice of Torrance for the voice of the church father. A second source for identifying Torrance's unique contribution is in examining what and how he edits and revises a

Manual on Church Doctrine. Torrance adjusts the theology of the original authors of the *Manual of Church Doctrine*, whom he calls high church Calvinists, and reflects his own distinctive incarnational theology. The comparison is achieved through placing the two editions in parallel columns and noting the deletions, additions and changes that Torrance makes (See Appendix Two).

Not only is it necessary to hear Torrance's distinctive voice but it is also necessary to have a distinctive Westminster voice. The chapter considers ten objections that Torrance made of Westminster theology in the May 1960 report of The Special Commission on Baptism.²¹ While some questions regarding the accuracy of Torrance's presentation of Westminster theology are raised, these criticisms draw attention to areas of neglect that are important to consider.

Chapter Five presents Bavinck's doctrine of baptism in order to distinguish it from Torrance's doctrine. It then considers how Torrance's treatment of baptism can serve as an example for how Westminster theology can recover the meaning of baptism as it is centred in the person and work of Christ. The strengths and weaknesses of each view of baptism are considered. One weakness common to both views is the confusion that is created by attempting to apply the theology of discipleship baptism to infant baptism to establish a case for the primacy of infant baptism. This section will conclude that the Church of Scotland, following on from the Special Commission on Baptism, was correct in giving greater prominence to discipleship baptism.

The final section sketches an outline of what a reformed view of baptism might look like following Torrance's example, albeit rejecting the main thrust of his soteriological paradigm but embracing a number of important themes that have previously been neglected.

Chapter Six briefly explores Torrance's legacy on baptism and draws together the conclusions of the thesis and provides some suggestion for further work on Torrance's doctrine of baptism.

²¹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1960).

Chapter One: Locating Torrance's Doctrine of Baptism and the Major Influences that Shaped His Doctrine of Baptism

This chapter will explore the major influences that shaped Torrance's doctrine of baptism. First the general influences that set the stage for not only Torrance but for the whole twentieth century debate on baptism are considered. From the early church to the period of the reformation three broad categories of baptismal views emerged, namely baptismal regeneration, symbolism and instrumentalism. Torrance's doctrine of baptism is developed in dialogue, but mainly in opposition to these three views. Also apparent from the survey of baptism is how each doctrine of baptism is shaped by the prevailing view of soteriology.

The consideration moves from the general influences that shaped Torrance's view of baptism to three specific influences on his doctrine of baptism:

1. The liturgical renewal movement,
2. The ecumenical movement, and
3. Barth and Barth's changing view of baptism.

1.1 The General Influences that Shaped Torrance's Doctrine of Baptism

The purpose here is not to provide a comprehensive²² history of baptism but to indicate how the three categories of baptism emerged and to establish that soteriology governs the understanding of baptism.²³

Torrance is influenced by the three major categories of baptism, baptismal regeneration, symbolical and instrumental, as he either embraces or rejects the soteriology that lies behind them. Having identified the soteriology that lies behind the regenerative and symbolical views, the instrumental category will then be the focus for the chapters that follow. Three representatives from church history will be selected and their view of baptism summarised to outline each of the three categories of baptism mentioned above, and to demonstrate how each category of baptism reflects the soteriological stance of the representative. The Roman Catholic Church will be selected to represent baptismal regeneration. Zwingli will be used to represent a symbolic view of baptism and Calvin will be selected to represent

²² An extensive survey of baptism in the early church can be found in E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009). See also Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

²³ 'There is more to soteriology than baptism, and there is more to baptism than forgiveness. Yet baptism is integral to soteriology and forgiveness is integral to baptism.' George Hunsinger, 'Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 3 (2000), p. 247.

instrumentalism. The Roman Catholic Church believes in and promotes baptismal regeneration. At the time of the reformation, Zwingli, reacting to baptismal regeneration, presented baptism as symbolic. Calvin, with an eye on both the Roman Catholic and Zwinglian views, presented an instrumental view of baptism. While there are differences to be observed among those within each of the three categories, it is largely these three general categories of baptism that will be considered here without delving into the nuanced strands within each group. This is in order that the scene can be set to understand what Torrance reacts to, and in reaction what he develops in his own view of baptism. Much of the debate that arises within and between proponents of these three categories of baptism arises, according to Torrance, because of a flawed soteriology and a pernicious dualism²⁴ that has infiltrated the thinking and presuppositions of much of western theology.

The vast majority of Christians have at some point in their lives been baptised. This is a rite that shares a common experience across a wide spectrum of Christian tradition and would suggest to the casual observer that baptism is full of ecumenical potential. However the reality that surrounds baptism is not unity but division.²⁵ It is ironic that although the Scriptures speak of one baptism, and baptism is the sacrament of union with Christ, yet baptism is one of the most divisive issues among Christians. Ursinus says that ‘The sacraments are bonds of mutual love. Those who have entered into a league with Christ, the Head of the church, ought not to be at variance with each other.’²⁶ The fact that variance exists is not so much down to disputes over the details of the administration of baptism but more related to the understanding of the soteriology that lies behind the doctrine of baptism.

Baptism is controversial because of the central place that it has in theology as Vander Zee comments,

The meaning of baptism is so central to the Christian faith that if I were to fully explain the meaning and implications of baptism to a

²⁴ For a discussion on Torrance’s view of dualism see Titus Chung, *Thomas Torrance's Mediations and Revelation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh*; Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*; Man Kei Ho, *A Critical Study on T. F. Torrance's Theology of Incarnation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008); Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*.

²⁵ ‘One of Jesus’ last recorded commands to his followers was, ‘Go ... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matt. 28:19). Most of the followers have obeyed his command. ... Yet despite this, perhaps no other command of Christ has occasioned so much controversy, division, bitterness and mutual mistrust.’ D. Phypers and D. Bridge, *The Water That Divides: Two Views on Baptism Explored* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2008), p. 7.

²⁶ Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. Willard, W., Fourth American Edition. (Hong Kong: Forgotten Books, 1851), p. 345.

new convert, she would have a rich and deep understanding of the whole Christian faith and life from that discussion alone.²⁷

Vander Zee goes on to express why baptism has been the subject of vigorous debate, 'If baptism is so central to the Christian faith, and it is the focal point of so many basic Christian truths, we can understand why it's also a flash point for controversy.'²⁸ The link between salvation and baptism is also acknowledged by Baptist theologians.²⁹ That baptism is shaped by theological presupposition is clearly demonstrated by one paedobaptist author who states at the outset of his work that his methodological commitment is that God reveals himself to his people through Christ and covenant.³⁰ In other words, his commitment to a covenant concept of soteriology will shape his view of baptism. It is not just modern theologians that have their view of baptism shaped by their soteriology as the three representatives considered here will demonstrate.

In the Church of Scotland's Special Commission³¹ on Baptism, where Torrance served as convenor and was largely responsible for the majority of the drafting, substantial space is afforded to the survey of the history of baptism in the church. Torrance believes this history is important as a backdrop to the development of his own view.

Since Torrance holds Augustine responsible for setting the wrong course along which Western theology followed, Torrance's assessment of the Augustinian tradition will be outlined before considering the representatives from the three categories of baptism.

1.1.1 The Augustinian Tradition

Torrance holds Augustine responsible for the dualist thinking that established a definition of a sacrament that has influenced the whole of the Western Church down to the present day. While Torrance does not believe that Augustine embraced all the errors that later emerged in the church on baptism, he does see the root of the

²⁷ Leonard J. Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 101-102.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁹ 'Baptism is important precisely because it is tied to the gospel, to the saving work that Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection.' Wright, Schreiner, *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Clendenen E. R. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), p. 1.

³⁰ This presuppositional commitment to the idea of covenant is reinforced in the author's criticism of a credobaptist work that mentions the concept of covenant but in the author's view only in a nominal sense. The implication is that a thorough going commitment to the concept of covenant is required in defending his particular view of baptism. J.V. Fesko, *Word, Water and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), p. 1.

³¹ The history of the Special Commission is outlined in Chapter Three.

problem to reside with Augustine. Torrance is critical of the Augustinian tradition that gave rise to the notion of a sacramental universe.³² In creation it is believed that ‘God gave it a symbolic character, corresponding to a heavenly and spiritual. Thus, by a sacramental principle, outward and visible things were signs leading to a world of invisible, mystical realities.’³³ It was this Augustinian doctrine that Torrance believed dominated the view of the Roman Catholic Church and also found its way into the churches of the reformation. Torrance finds fault specifically with Augustine’s definition of a sacrament as an outward visible sign of an inward invisible grace.³⁴ It was this definition, argues Torrance, which led to some unfortunate results. Over time the emphasis on Christ was displaced by the ritual acts associated with the sacraments and the church took the place as the dispenser of grace by means of the sacraments.³⁵

1.1.2 The Roman Catholic Church and Baptismal Regeneration

Torrance plots the course that baptism took from Augustine through Peter Lombard, Aquinas and the Schoolmen. This trajectory arrived at the stated dogma of baptismal regeneration by the Roman Catholic Church. According to the Roman Catholic Catechism (2.1.4), says Torrance, a sacrament is defined as ‘a visible sign of invisible grace instituted for our justification,’³⁶ where by justification is meant the infusion of sanctifying grace through the Roman Catholic Church, which has the exclusive right to dispense it. Any subjective element in baptism is minimized in the Roman Catholic conception, where baptism was considered as the sacrament of regeneration and initiation into the church, and became the dominant view.³⁷ The Roman Catholic Church viewed itself to be the channel of grace for sinners. The two

³² It is interesting that one of the few authors that acknowledges his indebtedness to Torrance on the subject of baptism embraces the idea of a sacramental universe. Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. Torrance comments ‘In the Augustinian tradition, with its powerful ingredient of Neoplatonism, which dominated the Middle Ages, the universe was regarded as a sacramental macrocosm in which the physical and visible creation was held to be the counterpart in time to eternal and heavenly patterns.’ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 66.

³³ ‘This sacred symbolism implanted by God in the material creation was held to shadow forth the special sacramental means of grace which have their source in the incarnation.’ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957), p. 5.

³⁴ Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh*, p. 62, fn. 12.

³⁵ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957), p. 6.

³⁶ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957), p. 15.

³⁷ ‘Baptism is not the final nor efficient cause of justification. It is the instrumental cause, and, as such, is absolutely necessary. ... Baptism is not sufficient for salvation, for the grace it confers requires the co-operation of the recipient. If he puts any hindrance such as mortal sin in the way of it, he will lose it. Yet it does confer an indelible character in the sense that the baptized is given a spiritual seal which cannot be lost, and which will always make it possible for him to make use of the other means of grace in the Church.’ Ibid., p. 16.

most powerful means of grace that God had placed at the disposal of the church were prayer and the sacraments.³⁸

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is held in high esteem within the Roman Catholic Church; ‘Canonized in 1326, made a Doctor of the Church in 1567, commended for study by Pope Leo XIII (*Aeterni Patris*) in 1879, and declared patron of Catholic schools in 1880.’³⁹ Thomas’s work on baptism has been consulted and used to represent Roman Catholic teaching on baptism and Thomas’s teaching will be shown to be broadly in keeping with official Roman Catholic dogma through reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁴⁰

Thomas is reliant on Augustine for his understanding of the meaning of a sacrament as a sacred sign.⁴¹ ‘[S]acraments are properly signs of something bringing holiness to men.’⁴² Thomas refers to the tradition of the church and says ‘we have it on the authority of many holy men that the sacraments of the New Law not only signify grace but cause it.’⁴³ Referring specifically to baptism Thomas says,

The sacraments ... produce certain special effects that are needed in the Christian life: baptism, for example, achieves a kind of spiritual rebirth in which man dies to sins and becomes a member of Christ, and this is something special over and above the ordinary activity of the soul’s powers.⁴⁴

Thomas opposes Hugh of St Victor’s idea of the sacraments being considered as *consecrated containers of invisible grace*.⁴⁵ Thomas adds, ‘grace doesn’t exist in a sacrament completely, but flows through it. In that sense we can talk of the sacrament as containing grace.’⁴⁶

Thomas proposes that there are three important aspects to the sacramental action of baptism: ‘that which is sign only, that which is both reality and sign, and that which is reality only and not sign.’⁴⁷ The sign only is the outward action, that which is the visible outward sign of the internal effect, and this Thomas calls the sacrament. The external sign is not just the water but the action in the washing by water.

³⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), p. 610.

³⁹ N. L. Geisler, ‘Thomas Aquinas’ in Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 1091.

⁴⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition, (Washington: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997).

⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, ed. Timothy McDermott (Maryland: Christian Classics, Westminster, 1991), p. 546.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 550.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 551.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 552.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

Thomas is opposing the teaching that the water is the sacrament and emphasises that 'the sacrament is to be found where the making holy is done ...'⁴⁸ The reality and the sign is described by Thomas as the *baptismal character*. The reality is the internal justification. The efficacy of baptism, according to Thomas, is derived from its institution, 'Baptism received this power when Christ was baptized.'⁴⁹ The mode of baptism is incidental to Thomas though he adds 'Immersion more expressly symbolizes Christ's burial, and so is the commoner usage and more praiseworthy.'⁵⁰ While Thomas believes that the sacrament of the eucharist is the greatest of all sacraments he says that, 'Baptism however is the most necessary of all the sacraments, being the rebirth of man into a spiritual life: infants have no other way of salvation and without baptism adults cannot receive full forgiveness of both sin and its punishment.'⁵¹ Thomas holds a high view of the sacraments but is careful to note that 'God does not so bind his power to the sacraments that he cannot bestow their effects in other ways ...'⁵² Referring to infant baptism Thomas says that, 'Children not yet able to use their own reasons are so to speak in the womb of the church and receive salvation not by their own act but by hers.'⁵³ Describing the effects of baptism Thomas says,

In baptism a man dies to the oldness of sin and starts to live in newness of grace; so every sin is taken away by baptism. In baptism a man is incorporated into Christ's suffering and death: *If we have shared death with Christ, we believe we shall share life with him*. Clearly every baptized person shares in Christ's suffering for his own healing as if he himself suffered and died. Now the suffering of Christ makes enough amends for all men's sins. So someone who is baptized is freed from all liability to punishment for sins, just as if he himself had made enough amends for all his sins. The penalty Christ suffered is shared with the baptized person, become a member of Christ's body, as if he himself had suffered that penalty.⁵⁴

Roman Catholic scholar Aiden Kavanagh sets baptism in the broader context of a whole ensemble of events associated with the making of a Christian.⁵⁵ Kavanagh laments the separating out of the act of confirmation from Christian initiation in the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 562.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 563.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 559.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 565.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 566.

⁵⁵ Aiden Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1978).

practice of the Roman Catholic Church. He states that the Roman Catholic Church has not experienced the same level of debate on the subject of baptism as that seen in the continental reformed churches and within the Church of England.⁵⁶ Kavanagh approves of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council believing that they represented a measure of recovery of the rite of Christian initiation. Following on from the Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church produced an official catechism. Pope John Paul commended the catechism saying

The Church now has at her disposal this new authoritative exposition of the one and perennial apostolic faith, and it will serve as a 'valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion' and as a 'sure and authentic text' for preparing local catechism.⁵⁷

The catechism confirms that Thomas's teaching is broadly in line with current official Roman Catholic dogma. The catechism contains a section on the seven sacraments of the church. The first three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the eucharist are grouped together and presented as the sacraments of Christian initiation. The catechism describes the benefits of these three sacraments, 'The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.'⁵⁸ The sacrament of baptism is called "*the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit,*" for it signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one can enter the kingdom of God.'⁵⁹ The catechism states that salvation is bound to the sacrament of baptism although God himself is not bound by the sacraments. The grace of baptism is seen in the forgiveness of sins, 'By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God...'⁶⁰

The Roman Catholic Church proceeded on the assumption that the sacraments contain all that is necessary for salvation. Through baptism grace is infused *ex opere operato* into the baptised person, the person is regenerated and to the person is granted the forgiveness of sin and the removal of the guilt attached to sin. Since the Roman Catholic Church believes that they have the power and authority to dispense grace, and that it is through the sacraments of the church that grace is given, then it

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 87.

⁵⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. xv.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 311.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 312.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 322.

follows that baptism is the means of initiation into salvation and the church. Their doctrine of baptism is clearly consistent with their view of soteriology.

1.1.3 Zwingli and Baptism as Symbolic

The reformation period saw radical changes in theology, not least in soteriology, and because of the link between soteriology and baptism, this brought changes to the doctrine of baptism. Torrance, in expressing his agreement with the reformers rejects the doctrine of baptismal regeneration on the grounds that it is not consistent with the Gospel,

The Reformers were led to reject as irreconcilable with the Gospel, the claim of the Roman Church, as a sacramental organism, to be the extension of the Incarnation, the prolongation of the Atonement and therefore to have exclusive possession of the means of grace.⁶¹

Torrance observes the unity that was evident in the rejection of baptismal regeneration, but notes that there were significant differences in three main reformed views, namely, the Lutheran, the Calvinist and the Anglican. The discussion of the Lutheran and Anglican view will not be undertaken here, as the discussion while important, is not necessary here in establishing the three categories of baptism under consideration. Instead the discussion will look from this point only at Calvin and Zwingli.

Zwingli rejected the word ‘sacrament’ on the grounds that it was a misunderstood word and that it artificially grouped together rites that are better understood individually.⁶² Zwingli describes the confusion surrounding the meaning of the word *sacrament* as a serious perversion, ‘In our native tongue the word suggests something that has power to take away sin and to make us holy,’⁶³ Zwingli asserts that the sacraments are only signs, ‘For if they are the things which they signify they are no longer signs: for sign and thing signified cannot be the same thing.’⁶⁴ While Stephens suggests that there was development in Zwingli’s understanding of the word ‘sacrament’ his settled meaning of the term was derived from the Latin word for oath, and understood as the oath or pledge that a person makes to a superior.⁶⁵ However because it was a term that was widely in use he was prepared to accept it.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957), p. 18.

⁶² W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 180.

⁶³ Huldrych Zwingli, ‘Of Baptism,’ in *Zwingli and Bullinger, The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. 24, ed. G. W. Bromiley (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 131.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, p. 181.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Zwingli's understanding of the sacraments moves from his earlier writings, where they are signs of the covenant with which God assures us, through a period where the emphasis is on them as signs with which we assure others that we are one with them in the church, to the later writings, where something of both these emphases is present.⁶⁷

Zwingli's view of baptism was largely forged on the anvil of dispute, mostly with the Anabaptists. In particular Zwingli responds to their opposition to infant baptism. Stephens notes that initially baptism was not given a high priority by Zwingli.⁶⁸ On the matter of baptism Zwingli asserts 'I can only conclude that all the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles. ... for all the doctors have ascribed to the water a power which it does not have and the holy apostles did not teach.'⁶⁹

Zwingli distinguishes between the outward and the inward, and notes that 'no external thing can make us pure or righteous.'⁷⁰ As he makes use of the difference in the inward and outward he identifies four uses of the word baptism in the New Testament.

First, it is used for the immersion in water whereby we are pledged individually to the Christian life. Second, it is used for the inward enlightenment and calling when we know God and cleave to him – that is the baptism of the Spirit.

Third, it is used for the external teaching of salvation and external immersion in water.

Finally it is used for external baptism and internal faith, that is, for the Christian salvation and dispensation as a whole.⁷¹

It is only the outward baptism either by external teaching or dipping in water that can be given today, argues Zwingli, for only God can give the baptism of the Spirit.⁷² This baptism of the Spirit is 'the baptism of inward teaching, calling, and cleaving to God.'⁷³ Zwingli explicitly denies that salvation is connected to baptism, 'Christ himself did not connect salvation with baptism: it is always by faith alone.'⁷⁴ In his earlier writings Zwingli's view of baptism showed evidence of inconsistency, particularly as it related to infant baptism.⁷⁵ Zwingli stressed the role of faith in baptism and because an infant could not show evidence of faith, Zwingli was accused

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 192.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 195.

⁶⁹ Zwingli, 'Of Baptism', p. 130.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 132.

⁷² Ibid., p. 133.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

⁷⁵ Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, p. 194.

of denying infant baptism. In his defence, Zwingli later admitted that he had said that it was better not to baptise children until they reached the age of discretion. However this assertion, he acknowledges, was based upon his erroneous view that baptism was intended to strengthen faith.⁷⁶ Zwingli was consistent throughout his writing career in stating that baptism did not create faith. Zwingli was also influenced by Augustine's definition of a sacrament and therefore emphasised the distinction between the outward and the inward insisting that outward things cannot accomplish inward results.⁷⁷ He views the Holy Spirit flowing from heaven as the water with which Christ said one must be baptised and faith that comes from the Spirit. The outward baptism instructs the outward man, and the outward man becomes certain of what comes to the inward man. The sacrament was a sign of a sacred thing. Baptism was the outward sign of an inward work. For Zwingli baptism did not bring grace but testified of grace. Here baptism was understood as a symbol of something else.

In addition Zwingli also believed that baptism was a public testimony, an announcement of having been received into the church, and also a declaration of intent to live in a pure and guiltless way. This differs markedly from the Roman Catholic view. The water is not viewed as a conduit for God's grace but rather as an analogy to what occurs by God's work through the Spirit.

Zwingli argued for infant baptism on the grounds that baptism is the initiation both of those who have already believed and those who were going to believe.⁷⁸ He provides a biblical example of some who were baptised prior to belief in Christ in those who received John the Baptist's baptism. John the Baptist's baptism was a baptism into Christ for some who would later believe in Christ.⁷⁹ A further argument in favour of infant baptism put forward by Zwingli was the link between circumcision and baptism. Zwingli insists that baptism does not convey grace to the baptised infant. While baptism did not confer grace, it assisted the contemplation of faith. Stephens notes in 1525 in *A Reply to Hubmaier* that there is an important development in Zwingli's case for infant baptism.⁸⁰ Baptism is presented by Zwingli as a sign of God's covenant with his people rather than a sign of his people's covenant, and infant baptism is supported on the basis of God's people being a part of

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), p. 276.

⁷⁸ Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, p. 196.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 206.

the one covenant made with Abraham and consummated in Christ. The sign is the sign of God's covenant and promise, rather than his people's pledge to live a godly life. This understanding of sign fits adult and infant baptism alike.

In Zwingli's later writings, baptism, says Stephens, is given a corporate, rather than an individual significance, for by it the baptised are made members of the visible church. 'In baptism faith is necessary, but the faith is not a person's inward faith, which God knows, but we do not, but the Christian faith which the church holds.'⁸¹ There is a certain appeal to the symbolic view arising from its simplicity as it removes the complexity of having to wrestle with the efficacy of baptism.

It seems strange that Torrance in his extensive survey of the history of baptism did not give more attention to Zwingli, especially since this is the view that Barth finally adopted, Barth even describing himself as a neo-Zwinglian.⁸² Torrance outlines his history of baptism in the special commission reports over the years 1956-1959. The reports had to be available for May of each year so the material would have to have been completed quite early in the year for inclusion. Barth had announced his Zwinglian view in his 1959-1960 lectures. His son Markus had published his book on baptism in 1951 and Karl Barth acknowledges how this work had changed his mind on baptism. Was it that Karl Barth's view just came too late for Torrance to warrant closer attention to Zwingli? Is it possible that Torrance was not aware of Markus Barth's publication?⁸³ Was Torrance at this point unaware of the trajectory of Barth's thinking with regard to baptism? Torrance would have already have been aware of Barth's rejection of infant baptism. Given that Torrance was in personal correspondence with Barth on the subject of baptism at this time, as will be dealt with in Chapter three, this seems a surprising omission.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 213.

⁸² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Christian Life (Fragment)*, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, vol. IV/4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), p. 130.

⁸³ Torrance relates a conversation that he says took place in Edinburgh in 1966 between Karl and Markus Barth and himself, when Karl Barth was in Scotland to receive an honorary degree. Torrance says that Markus was aware of his opposition to his book on baptism. McKim, *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, p. 63. However Busch states that Barth and his son Markus attended the University of Edinburgh in 1956. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1975), p. 422. If 1956 is the correct date of the conversation then Torrance was aware of Markus's work on baptism and at that point Karl Barth's final work on baptism had not been published.

1.1.4 Calvin's Instrumental View of Baptism

Torrance held Calvin in high esteem and believed that the way forward for the Church of Scotland on the subject of baptism was to follow the lead that Calvin gave the church, 'The Commission is convinced that Calvin has shown us the right line to follow...'⁸⁴ The space given to Calvin in the commission's report is testimony to the influence that Calvin had on Torrance, or perhaps the desire that Torrance had to see himself as a successor of Calvin's theology.

Torrance identifies union with Christ as a central doctrine in Calvin's *Institutes*. Calvin, says Torrance, 'expounds the doctrine of the Church as the sphere where that union with Christ is effectively mediated through the ministry of the Word and sacraments.'⁸⁵ Torrance viewed the mediaeval theologians as deriving the efficacy of the sacraments from the Church, and Luther thought of the Church as entirely dependent upon the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. However, for Torrance Calvin's view took a middle course which was closely linked to his view on covenant.

Torrance distinguishes between Calvin's covenantal special sphere of communication in history and Augustine's sacramental universe. The purpose of the sacraments is to initiate and keep God's people in covenant fellowship. The corporate character of the covenant makes the sacraments corporate also. Torrance says that Calvin emphasised the unity of the covenant in the Old and New Testaments. The sacraments of the Old Testament correspond to those of the New, but differed in economy and administration. For Calvin, says Torrance, Christ is the substance of the Old and New administration of the one covenant. In the New Covenant Christ was offered as the One in whom all the promises have already been realised.⁸⁶ Two important corollaries follow from this, argues Torrance,

(a) Because the Covenant is fulfilled in Christ, the covenant-union with God is fulfilled in the Church as the Body of Christ. This union with Christ is of the very essence of the New Covenant. For this reason personal and sacramental union with Christ transcends the form of union with God under ceremony and law. (b) Because the sacraments of the New Testament are signs and seals of the New Covenant, in Christ, they are signs and seals of union with Christ and with the Church which is His Body...⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 7.

⁸⁵ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957), p. 25.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Torrance offers Calvin's definition of a sacrament as a good balance of the objective and subjective,

It is an external sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences His promise of good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith and we in turn testify our piety toward Him, both before Him, and before angels as well as men.⁸⁸

Torrance draws attention to the importance that Calvin places on the Word preached. Through the preaching of the Word the people of God are trained and taught and then confirmed by the sacraments.

Torrance notes Calvin's stress on faith. Since the sacraments are bound to the Word as sign and seal this means that they cannot be used efficaciously without faith. Faith for Calvin, says Torrance, is more than intellectual assent, 'At its heart lies a union with Christ in which the whole person is involved.'⁸⁹ From God's side this union is the bond of the Spirit and from humanity's side it is the faith response, where such response is the special gift of God. This Spirit and faith union in Christ is generated and increased by God through the Word and sacraments: Calvin thus deals with both the objective and the subjective but emphasising the primacy of the objective, notes Torrance.

This leads to Torrance identifying what he considers to be Calvin's most important contribution to the doctrine of the sacraments. Torrance says that there is much more to the idea of the faith union than the operation of the Spirit and the response of faith. Torrance quotes Calvin

The thing requisite must be not only to be partakers of Christ's Spirit, but also to participate in His humanity, in which He rendered all obedience to God His Father, in order to satisfy our debts, although properly speaking, the one cannot be without the other; for when He gives Himself to us, it is in order that we may possess Himself entirely.⁹⁰

Torrance adds that what prompts Calvin to make this point is his conception of the atonement as wrought out by the whole course of Christ's obedience on our behalf in his life and death. Reading the above quotation in the context⁹¹ in which Calvin made it raises some questions about Torrance's assessment on what motivated Calvin to make the comment.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

⁹¹ John Calvin, *A Treatise on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (Edinburgh: John Johnston, 1838), p. 170.

Torrance summarises Calvin's views on the sacraments:

The sacraments are instituted by God to signify the whole Christ with all His blessings. They therefore promise and bestow far more than is effected at the time of sacramental operation. They bring the participant into a fullness of grace in which he receives and enjoys more and more what has already been offered to him in Christ, so that the reality which will in the end be fulfilled is one that is already given in the beginning. The mode of signification is one in which Christ adapts Himself to us in our weakness, and through physical and sensible instruments raises us up to real and effective union and communion with Himself. The mode of operation is the sovereign and miraculous act of the Holy Spirit, who acts creatively upon us through Word and sacrament, giving us in soul and body to participate in Christ and all His blessings, and to share in the communion of the Holy Trinity.⁹²

Torrance moves from a discussion of Calvin's general view of the sacraments to his teaching on baptism. Torrance notes Calvin's view of the parallel between circumcision and baptism. In addition baptism, for Calvin, is an entrance into the church. Baptism has two sides. From God's side, His part is active and from humanity's side the part is merely passive. Baptism is the sacrament of covenant promise, but, says Torrance, it is also the sacrament of obedience to the God of the covenant, completely fulfilled in the whole course of Christ's obedience offered to God on our behalf. 'In Christ the Covenant is fulfilled from both sides: from the side of God and from the side of man.'⁹³ This fulfilled covenant in Christ has baptism as its sacrament and sign and seal. Torrance stresses the fulfilled nature of the covenant and identifies the connection between soteriology and baptism in Calvin's theology.

Torrance provides a section on the 'One Baptism'. In this section Torrance includes the phrase, 'common to Christ and His church' within quotes and comments, 'This corporate nature of Baptism derives from the fact that "the whole Church" is already washed and baptized in Christ (Inst. IV. Xvi. 22; IV. Xv. 2; comm. On Eph. V 26).'⁹⁴

In the context of providing an explanation of how to explain the baptism of one who later in life shows no evidence of adhering to the Christian faith Torrance refers to Calvin's commentary on Romans⁹⁵ where Calvin speaks of a 'threefold form of

⁹² Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957), p. 30.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁹⁵ Romans 11:22, *ibid.*

grafting and a twofold form of cutting off.’⁹⁶ Torrance describes what is meant by Calvin. The first engrafting is the inclusion of the children of the faithful in fulfilment of the covenant promise. The second engrafting is of those who receive the Gospel but which either takes no root or is choked before it bears fruit. The third engrafting is of the elect who receive eternal life. The first cutting off is those in the first group who refuse the covenant promise. The second cutting off is of those in the second group when the seed of the Gospel withers in them.⁹⁷ Rankin refers to this being mentioned by Torrance in a private interview.⁹⁸ In this interview Torrance does not provide such a full answer or perhaps Rankin does not relate a full answer from his recorded interview with Torrance. However the important point to draw from this interview with Torrance is how Torrance offers a new explanation and says that the first engrafting into Christ is the fundamental grafting into Christ in incarnational union and the second engrafting into Christ is in baptism.⁹⁹ Rankin does not offer any explanation for the meaning of ‘cutting off’. This may be because the context of his work is incarnational union with Christ. This raises an important question. Does this change in explanation hint at a paradigmatic change from Calvin to Torrance in the soteriology that lies behind their respective doctrines of baptism?

Torrance then describes Calvin’s baptism as a trinitarian baptism or a threefold act of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father receives the baptised person by adoption, the Son restores to the Father by way of reconciliation, and through baptism, since the child of God is consecrated to God, they need the interposition of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to make them new creatures.

Referring again to Calvin’s view of the role of faith, Torrance notes that for Calvin this does not mean that a person is to be baptised on the ground of faith but rather upon the ground of the promise of God alone.

Baptism ‘is not just a sign with a meaning, but the sign with which God actually seals us as His own, so that to the Word of the Gospel announcing our ablution and sanctification, God adds Baptism in order to seal it, and to seal it on our bodies.’¹⁰⁰

Torrance is in agreement with Calvin that the meaning of baptism cannot be drawn from the external ceremony. The promises contained in the preaching of the

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ William Duncan Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* (The University of Edinburgh, 1997), p. 169, fn. 9.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957), p. 35.

Word are chiefly Christ, argues Calvin. The Christ who offers himself in the Word is the same Christ who offers himself in baptism. For Calvin, in baptism Christ assures the believer that his or her sins are forgiven as a result of the atonement and that this forgiveness is brought about through the mortification of the believer.¹⁰¹

The brief survey identifies the three categories of baptism, baptismal regeneration, symbolical and instrumental. Baptismal regeneration attributes efficacy to the ritual. Symbolism does not attribute any efficacy to the sacrament. Calvin's instrumental view seeks to establish something between these two views. It is in the tradition of Calvin that Torrance identifies himself.

In the early church and the medieval period each theology helps shape the view of baptism. The two views of baptism developed by Zwingli and Calvin, at the time of the reformation, reflect how they react to their rejection of baptismal regeneration and the views of the Anabaptists. These three views form the general backdrop to Torrance's doctrine of baptism. Torrance's view could be said to fit into the instrumental category. There are as many tensions in calling Calvin's view an instrumental¹⁰² view as arise when calling Torrance's doctrine of baptism, instrumental. Torrance's view of baptism reflects his own view of soteriology. The question that arises is, is this soteriology to be found in Calvin or is this an innovation on Torrance's part? It is in keeping with the history of the doctrine of baptism that the prevailing theology shapes how baptism is considered. The three categories of baptism will also be important in shaping Torrance's doctrine of baptism as he rejects and reacts to each of these categories.

1.2 Specific Influences on Torrance's Doctrine of Baptism

Moving on from the general influences on Torrance's theology to the more specific, the task is to examine three of the major background factors that gave rise to a vigorous European wide debate on baptism in the mid twentieth century, thus setting the scene for Torrance's consideration of baptism. These three factors are the ecumenical movement, the liturgical renewal movement¹⁰³ and Barth and Barth's

¹⁰¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, ed. John Thomas McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.XV.5, p. 1307.

¹⁰² Grislis discusses the tensions associated with Calvin's instrumental view. Egil Grislis, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Baptism,' in *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, ed. Richard C. Gamble (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992).

¹⁰³ 'The twentieth century saw significant shifts in liturgical emphasis as well as lively theological debate: and baptism achieved new prominence in the ecumenical movement as the bond of unity among Christians.' David M. Thompson, *Baptism, Church and Society in Modern Britain* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), p. xv.

publications on baptism. The chapter will describe and seek to draw out how these three factors provided a challenge to Torrance in how he would further the ecumenical and liturgical cause and defend infant baptism in the face of clear differences with Barth, whose broader theology he sought to embrace.

The ecumenical movement was born out of the self-consciousness of the church. In a growing secularised society and a diminishing church, attention was turning to discussions about church unity and cooperation between different confessional traditions. Questions arising on the foreign mission field about western style church divisions lacked a context for meaningful explanation, causing missionaries to ask basic questions about their denominational divisions and distinctives. Any advancement in church unity would require a reconsideration of previous disagreements and an attempt to understand each other's theological concerns. It was inevitable that the subject of baptism would figure in the discussions.¹⁰⁴ Barth and Torrance were thrust into this ecumenical movement and Barth's theological paradigm was offered, at least by Torrance, as a means of dislodging the theological logjam that kept so many churches apart. Torrance especially promoted Barth's incarnational theology and his rejection of dualism as a way of reaching agreement on issues like baptism.¹⁰⁵ However, the fly in the ointment is the fact that Barth and Torrance, while using the same theological paradigm, each ended with distinctly different views of baptism.

The liturgical renewal movement began with the Roman Catholic Church in the early nineteenth century and continued into the latter half of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ 'Throughout the early twentieth century, baptism was growing in importance for the churches. This was due primarily to the ecumenical movement.' D.C.A. Medgett, *Barth and Baptism: The Changing Shape of His Baptismal Theology* (Regent College, 1987), p. 14. 'The question of baptism, and the related and broader discussion of Christian initiation, is experiencing something of a revival of interest. Of particular importance is that this is occurring across confessional boundaries, the theological spectrum and the various theological disciplines – biblical, historical, liturgical and ecumenical studies, historical and systematic theology – each, often informing the others.' Anthony R. Cross, 'Being Open to God's Sacramental Work: A Study in Baptism,' in *Semper Reformandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (London: Paternoster Press, 2003), p. 355.

¹⁰⁵ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Order and Disorder*.

¹⁰⁶ 'There have appeared in modern times a number of movements for the deepening of the Christian idea and practice of worship – the *Zoe* movement among the Greek Orthodox – the 'Liturgical Movement' in the Roman Church, and another going by the same title in Scottish Presbyterianism – the 'Wesleyan Sacramental Fellowship' – sporadic Lutheran movements before the war (the best known but not the most interesting being that with which the name of F. Heiler was associated) – and the various offshoots of the 'Oxford Movement' in England which began in the last century. There is an obvious relation between them all throughout christendom. They have met with slightly varying degrees of official patronage and hindrance, and about the same intensity of popular misunderstanding,

Attention to liturgy undoubtedly had to consider the sacraments, and the sacrament of baptism came under particular scrutiny through the consideration of the rite of the initiation of Christian adults. The Anglican debate reflected the liturgical character of Anglican worship and theology, specifically, the reconsideration of the meaning of confirmation in light of its historic temporal separation from baptism in the Western Church. The Church of Scotland had interests in liturgical renewal and ecumenical unity and Torrance played a role in each of these movements.

A consideration of liturgy helps expose a further difference between Torrance and Barth.¹⁰⁷ Barth disliked liturgy but Torrance had a desire to further ecumenical discussion between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England.¹⁰⁸ The question under consideration that is pertinent to the understanding of baptism is ‘does liturgy have an efficacy that produces or creates more than merely cognitive awareness?’ Torrance sought to cast himself in the tradition of the Eastern Church fathers. Would Torrance’s appeal to the Eastern Church fathers extend to their understanding of the efficacy of the liturgy?

Barth’s changing views on baptism proved a particular challenge to Torrance and sparked considerably wider debate. Barth held three different views on baptism over his publishing lifetime. It is generally accepted that Barth, at first, held a traditionally reformed view¹⁰⁹ accepting that infant baptism was a sacrament of the church, changing to a second view that rejected infant baptism and held that it was believers’ baptism that was a sacrament of the church, to the final view that was published just a year before his death, where he believed in a non-sacramental view of believers’ baptism.

Barth believed that his theology led inevitably to a symbolic view of believers’ baptism. Torrance, who sought in Barth an alternative to the standard liberal and conservative approaches to theology, wanted to keep faith with Barth’s larger

wherever they have appeared.’ Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1960), p. xvi.

¹⁰⁷ ‘... in one breath Barth could align himself with liturgical reform, while in the next breath he could distance himself from most of the theology that was used to justify that renewal in the twentieth century.’ J. B. Buckley, ‘Christian Community, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 196.

¹⁰⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), p. 101.

¹⁰⁹ The issue of what is a traditionally reformed view of baptism will be considered later in chapter Five.

theological paradigm and to show how Barth's paradigm provided a robust argument for the continuation of infant baptism.¹¹⁰

1.2.1 The Ecumenical Movement

A consideration of the ecumenical movement is important in any consideration of Torrance's view of baptism. A brief historical sketch is given here mainly to demonstrate that the subject of the sacraments was very much to the fore of the ecumenical movement from the outset. The movement thrust both Barth and Torrance onto a world stage particularly on the subject of baptism. Torrance saw the plight of division among the churches to have arisen largely because of embracing a false dualism. Because of the direction of Barth's Church Dogmatics baptism had its place in volume four, but would Barth have pushed from ill health to publish the fragment from volume four if the profile on baptism had not been raised by ecumenical considerations? The modern ecumenical movement coincided with Barth's rise as an internationally recognised theologian and of Torrance who sought to bring Barth to the English speaking world.¹¹¹

The ecumenical movement has a goal to seek the unification of the Christian church.¹¹² The modern ecumenical movement was driven forward by Anglophone missionaries who struggled to explain the traditional church divisions to new converts on the mission field.¹¹³ Christian university students also played a major part as they had been involved in many interchurch activities and had established links across the

¹¹⁰ 'His (Barth's) rejection of infant Baptism then startled even those who in other respects were prepared to accept his theology.' H. Hartwell, 'Karl Barth on Baptism,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 22 (1969), pp. 12-13. While Torrance expresses disagreement with Barth on baptism the profound respect for Barth, even as Torrance refers to the motivation behind Barth's view of baptism, is seen in the eulogy that he writes for Barth just after Barth's death in the early hours of 10 December 1968. Speaking of Barth's view of the new humanity in Jesus Christ and the central nature of the resurrection of Christ, Torrance notes how Barth sought to work out how this new life in Christ demanded acts of obedience and Christian service. Torrance says that it was because of the passionate concern that Barth had for this theology that leads 'to the new shape he has tried to give to Baptism as the determining starting-point of Christian obedience in response to the vicarious obedience of Jesus Christ.' T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology 1910-1931* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1962), pp. 6-7.

¹¹¹ John Lewis McPake, *H.R. Mackintosh. T.F. Torrance and the Reception of the Theology of Karl Barth in Scotland - with Particular Reference to the Concept of the Self-Revelation of God* (The University of Edinburgh, 1994).

¹¹² Alasdair Heron remarks that, 'A striking new feature of 'institutional Christianity' in the twentieth century has been the emergence of a whole series of supra-denominational bodies which have aimed to encourage dialogue, co-operation and reconciliation between the long divided churches and confessions.' Alasdair I.C. Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology* (Cambridge: Lutherworth Press, 1980), p. 169.

¹¹³ According to Latourette 'The ecumenical movement was in large part the outgrowth of the missionary movement.' K. S. Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council,' in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, eds. R. Rouse & S. C. Neill (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), p. 353.

denominational divides.¹¹⁴ The church has a history of divisions but the twentieth century marked a time when mainstream Christianity began to recognise a need for unity in the church. There are a number of important factors that have carried the goal of unification forward. The very idea of ecumenism may be responsible for many Protestant denominations becoming more tolerant of variations in worship practices. This tolerance becomes more evident in areas of non-salvific doctrinal differences.

The First World Missionary Conference in 1910 in Edinburgh explored a common interest of missions.¹¹⁵ Wahba views the Edinburgh conference as demonstrating a 'degree of awareness of the urging of ecumenism among the churches originating from the Reformation.'¹¹⁶ The Edinburgh conference was the culmination of a number of previous conferences held in New York, London and Liverpool and especially the conference held in New York in 1900.¹¹⁷ The 1910 Edinburgh missionary conference focussed on three major points. First, the conference only dealt with the work of missions within non-Christian people groups; second, it focused on issues which were immediately pressing upon the church as a whole; third, there was not to be any discussion on ecclesiastical or doctrinal differences. This conference was a major factor in breaking down the boundaries between denominations because it caused the denominations to focus on a common interest. This meeting was not to be the end of the matter, 'Edinburgh 1910 gave the impulse which issued in the World Conference on Faith and Order. It was as a delegate to the Edinburgh Conference that Bishop Charles H. Brent saw the vision which led to initiate that movement.'¹¹⁸ However if the ecumenical goal was to move forward then there had to be a discussion of doctrine and doctrinal difference.¹¹⁹ In order to

¹¹⁴ In a biography of Archie Craig, a former Moderator of the Church of Scotland it was said 'The Student Christian Movement had introduced him in his late teens to a wider spectrum of Christian belonging than his United Free Church upbringing had let him encounter, ...' Elizabeth Templeton, *God's February: A Life of Archie Craig 1888-1985* (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), p. 55.

¹¹⁵ 'T.F. Torrance's father was present at that conference, though not as an official representative. He had returned from China after a split in his mission and at the 1910 Edinburgh conference he was asked to take over the Sichuan agency of the American Bible Society.' McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 10.

¹¹⁶ Wafig Wahba, 'The Ecumenical Responsibility of Reformed Theology: The Case of Egypt,' in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, eds. David Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), p. 87.

¹¹⁷ Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council', p. 355.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

¹¹⁹ 'Bishop Charles H. Brent missionary Bishop for the Philippines of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, felt that by the 1910 Edinburgh conference forbidding discussion of differences of opinion in doctrine and ecclesiastical structure and practice that the gathering was failing to face some

ensure that the momentum towards further co-operation was not lost, the conference agreed to set up a continuation committee to carry on its work. Brent left the Edinburgh conference with a desire to rally his own church to take a lead in preparing another world conference.¹²⁰ Vast effort was invested to encourage the participation of churches right across the world. Industrious efforts towards the first Faith and Order conference received a setback during the First World War. The new found unity was devastated by the churches taking sides with the warring nations, each feeling the right to call down a blessing from God for their cause. European churches found it difficult to overcome the suspicions that the war had produced. It seemed that only in America could the cause advance. The Protestant Episcopal Commission continued, albeit with a drastically scaled down plan, to host a North American preparatory conference which met in January 1916 with sixty three men attending, representing fifteen Churches. One of the five subjects proposed by them for study by the churches was ‘Grace and the Sacraments in General.’¹²¹

After the war the Episcopal Church Commission sent a deputation to Europe to attempt to recover the vision of a world conference on Faith and Order. After extensive representations it was decided to hold a preliminary meeting in Geneva in 1920. At Geneva a committee was elected to oversee the efforts to set up the First Faith and Order conference which was to be held in Lausanne in 1927. Unlike the Edinburgh conference that hosted representatives from missionary societies the Lausanne conference hosted church representatives. ‘[T]hey agreed that the observance of the generally acknowledged sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper is one of the “characteristics” whereby the church can be “known of men”’¹²²

of the basic issues confronting Christians. Speaking from the floor, he declared that he entirely accepted the wisdom of the decision that questions of faith and order should not be included in the programme of the Conference, since that body was primarily concerned with practical co-operation. Yet, he went on to say, Christians could not rest content with co-operation between separated bodies, and the causes of division must be examined with a view to their removal. Characteristically, he expressed his intention to do something about it. What he did is recorded in the history of the genesis of the Faith and Order movement.’ Ibid., p. 361.

¹²⁰ The following resolution was proposed by others who had been persuaded by the vision that Brent represented. ‘That a Joint Commission be appointed to bring about a Conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order, and that all Christian Communions throughout the world which confess Our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour be asked to unite with us in arranging for and conducting such a conference.’ T. Tatlow, ‘The World Conference on Faith and Order,’ in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, eds. R. Rouse & S. C. Neill (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), p. 407.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 414.

¹²² E. A. Payne, ‘Baptism in Recent Discussion,’ in *Christian Baptism*, ed. A. Gilmore (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), p. 15.

The reports of the Lausanne conference engendered a large response from many churches. A theological committee was set up.

Its purpose was to provide a representative body of experts to whom such subjects as the meaning of Grace, Ordination, and the Episcopacy might be referred with a view to their preparing material for a further world conference. The Theological Committee was placed under the care of the Bishop of Gloucester (A.C. Headlam) and took as its first subject the doctrine of Grace.¹²³

A considerable volume of papers were received from the churches over the years. In order to direct the discussion the committee sent out questionnaires related to The Doctrine of Grace, the Sacraments, and the Nature and Purpose of the Church.¹²⁴ In 1934 the committee met in Switzerland with the purpose of working towards their second world conference. The work of the theological committee was divided between three commissions dealing with: The Church and the Word, The Ministry and the Sacraments, and the Church's Unity in Life and Worship. The scene was being set for the subjects that Torrance would later pay great attention to.

The second World Conference on Faith and Order took place in Edinburgh in 1937. Tatlow notes that the most thorny of all the subjects discussed was the report on the ministry and the sacraments presented by Professor D. M. Baillie.¹²⁵ The theological papers and reports presented at the conference were well received. The main point of controversy of this conference was the proposal to consider setting up a world council of churches. However, this proposal with some clarifications and notes of objection was passed and the theological committee had a new project to take in hand following the 1937 conference. During the Second World War 'Somewhat unexpectedly, ... the meaning and practice of baptism became the subject of acute controversy in several different countries and in more than one Christian tradition.'¹²⁶ Payne says that this turn of events was attributed by the theologians to Brunner in *The Divine-Human Encounter* first published in German in 1938. The tempo of the

¹²³ Tatlow, 'The World Conference on Faith and Order', p. 427.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 429.

¹²⁵ Tatlow relates how Baillie referred to the deep differences that existed but that this was 'far ahead of anything the Churches are likely to have reached at present. Is not this the value of these ecumenical gatherings? We have come to discover our nearness to one another, and agreements were reached, not by compromise, but by genuine rapprochement which could not have come about otherwise. If it can happen on this ground of Ministry and Sacraments, it can happen on any ground; and if it can happen in a Conference like this, it can happen also in the churches themselves.... Something is happening here which is most significant.' Ibid., p. 433.

¹²⁶ Payne, 'Baptism in Recent Discussion', p. 16.

debate was increased by the release by Barth of *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* in 1943.

The Second World War was to slow the pace of development and the committee met after an eight year lapse in 1947. Then on 21 August 1948 the final meeting of the continuation committee (set up to move things forward) was to take place in Amsterdam when it gave consideration to a constitution for the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. Torrance responded extensively to the two volumes of preparatory studies that arose out of this meeting.¹²⁷ 'On the morning of Monday, 23 August 1948 the World Council of Churches came into existence.'¹²⁸

The formation of the World Council of Churches was a great triumph and cause of celebration for many. In the time since the conference in Edinburgh in 1910 many of the leaders had died and the baton was handed over to a new generation.¹²⁹ From 1948 a course was set for the Third World Conference in Lund in 1952. The preparatory document for the 1952 conference entitled *The Nature of the Church* became a collection of descriptions of various church traditions and communions in terms of their own distinctives. The Lund conference sent the following response back to the churches: 'We have seen clearly that we can make no real advance towards unity if we only compare our several conceptions of the nature of the Church and the traditions they are embodied.'¹³⁰ Barth and Torrance were involved in this conference and it is interesting that the recommendation from the conference was that,

to get beyond the impasse, the Conference recommended that in the future, Faith and Order treat the doctrine of the Church 'in close relation both to the doctrine of Christ and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.' Rather than to compare positions, people from all Churches were asked to study together the relationship between God and the Church. The full Trinitarian thrust was made clear in a recommendation from the next World conference, held at Montreal in 1963.¹³¹

¹²⁷ McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 95.

¹²⁸ W. A. V. Hooft, 'The Genesis of the World Council of Churches,' in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, eds. R. Rouse & S.C. Neill (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), p. 720.

¹²⁹ Torrance says of Barth that, 'With his vast authority and prestige as a prophetic teacher, his words made a profound impression at the Conference of the World Council of Churches held in Amsterdam in 1948.' Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), p. 12.

¹³⁰ M. B. Handspicker, 'Faith and Order 1948-1968,' in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968*, ed. H. E. Fey (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), p. 151.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*; 'Karl Barth's church dogmatics has become an ecumenical force not only because it strikes into the heart of the matter as it affects every church and because it brings within its range the whole

How much the influence of Barth and Torrance was behind this is not possible here to say, but if this was read in a Torrance publication it would certainly not seem out of place.

The ecumenical movement had gained momentum after the Second World War and the renewed focus on unity generated discussions between the churches. Alongside the larger project of the World Council of Churches attempts were made, with varying degrees of success, to unite different churches. Heron comments in this connection that as well as the larger ecumenical movement that there has

been a veritable explosion of ecumenical conversations, in which theologians from a wide range of different traditions have been involved. This has generated fresh thinking, particularly about the theology of the church and about the issues which have for centuries been most divisive – many of them having to do with the place and nature of the church itself, with forms of ministry, with the locus of authority, with patterns of worship.¹³²

Writing at the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the World Council of Churches, Konrad Raiser, the then General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), distinguished between the WCC and the ecumenical movement, ‘The World Council of Churches is an instrument of the ecumenical movement, but it is not identical with it.’¹³³ This wider ecumenical movement gave rise to dialogue at many levels among the churches. Conversations between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England took place and Torrance was appointed as a Church of Scotland representative. McGrath in his assessment of Torrance’s involvement says that Torrance’s major contribution was ‘not so much in his personal participation in the bilateral conversations of the time, but in his rigorous exploration of the fundamental theological principles which he considered to be the necessary basis of such dialogue.’¹³⁴

In the many inter-church conversations that were taking place the subject of baptism arose frequently. The WCC sought to give guidance to those discussions to help overcome these barriers among the churches about the nature and practices of

sweep of theology throughout the centuries, but also because it has raised in an irresistible way the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ.’ Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, p. 25.

¹³² Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology*, p. 170.

¹³³ Konrad Raiser, *Fifty Years World Council of Churches, Word and World* XVIII, no. 2 (1998), p. 116.

¹³⁴ McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 95.

baptism. Agreement has not resulted but at least a consensus was accepted in the 1982 WCC document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.¹³⁵ The document appears to want to lower the status of disagreement and so highlights the meaning and significance of baptism itself, an area where most can agree.

The ecumenical movement's impact on Torrance was to direct his work. It established an arena and an agenda for Torrance that included a consideration of the subject of baptism. As Torrance addresses the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland as convenor of the Special Commission on Baptism, the verbatim minutes of the General Assembly indicate how much Torrance was aware of the worldwide attention that was being given to their work.¹³⁶ This adds to the intrigue of why Torrance is ignored on the subject of baptism.

Torrance believed that if the churches could only escape the Western dualism that had shaped so much of their traditions that they would find unity much easier. This dualism was for Torrance the cause of the differences on the subject of baptism.

Torrance had a great ecumenical interest¹³⁷ and the ecumenical agenda included the subject of baptism. Torrance could not avoid the subject of baptism given his ecumenical interest and the prominence of baptism. The ecumenical movement sets the scene for Torrance's engagement with baptism.

1.2.2 The Liturgical Renewal Movement

A second movement that was significant to Torrance was the liturgical renewal movement. The revision of liturgies provided Torrance with an opportunity to disseminate his soteriology. The liturgical renewal movement was a diverse movement reflecting different ideas from those who attributed efficacy to the liturgy to those who merely wanted the liturgy to reflect their theology. Within the Church of Scotland Torrance sided with those who favoured the restoration of the place of the eucharist and a more structured service.¹³⁸

The Book of Common Worship for the Presbyterian Church (USA) commended by the General Assembly in 1993 introduces the liturgy by a brief preamble on worship.¹³⁹ Implicit in the description of worship is that liturgy does something, it

¹³⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.

¹³⁶ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1956), p. 909.

¹³⁷ Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, p. 16.

¹³⁸ 'Record,' *The Church Service Society*.

¹³⁹ 'Worship is at the very heart of the church's life. All that the church is and does is rooted in its worship. The community of faith, gathered in response to God's call, is formed in its worship. Worship is the principal influence that shapes our faith, and is the

brings a community together in response to the call from God, it shapes people, it causes community to adhere, it acknowledges the communion of the saints. This is just one example of the many handbooks on worship and liturgy that have been produced in the last few decades. Many churches, Reformed, Lutheran, Evangelical and Charismatic are experiencing a recovery of liturgy in their public worship.

Liturgy within many liturgical churches is not merely the form or order of words used in public worship. Liturgy is viewed from a trinitarian perspective as the glorification of God the Father by the Son, through the life-giving Holy Spirit. Liturgy is thought of as an action and this liturgical action is a trinitarian action. It is an action within the trinity that is from all eternity and also made present to the worshipper in the application of salvation. Jesus Christ's essential liturgical action within salvation is based on his passion, death, burial and resurrection. 'The pascal mystery of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection is the very heart of the Eucharist, which by *anamnesis* recalls it and makes its power present to the people here and now.'¹⁴⁰ Through Christ, the Father is glorified and salvation is offered to humanity. Worship is humanity's response to God,

Christ embodied the supreme and necessary response or Yes to his Father: 'in him it is always Yes'. Because of this, man can now make his response of faith in word and sacrament, and this is what he is doing in the liturgies, however various, of the Christian Church.¹⁴¹

Liturgy is part of the action of God in salvation: for not only is God glorified but worshippers can be sanctified. Since in God all is eternal, what Jesus Christ does in salvation becomes eternal. Thus the work of salvation while a completed work in time is more than an historical event from the past but is an eternal ever-present

most visible way we express faith. In worship, through Word and Sacrament, the church is sustained by the presence of Christ. Joined in worship to the One who is the source of its life, the church is empowered to serve God in the world. Because of the centrality of worship in the church's life, the continuing reform of worship is of primary importance in maintaining the integrity of the people of God. In an age dominated by individualism and secularism, it is particularly important to embrace forms of worship that are firmly rooted in the faith and foster a strong communal sense of being united with God, with the community of faith in every time and place, and with a broken world in need of God's healing touch. In other words, the concern for the reform of worship is, above everything else, a concern for the renewal of the church. ... This edition of the *Book of Common Worship* was prepared with the intention of seeking a liturgical expression that is faithful to the tradition of the church catholic, truly reformed, rooted in scripture, and related to life.' *Book of Common Worship PCUSA* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ J. D. Crichton, 'A Theology of Worship,' in *The Study of Liturgy*, eds. Geoffrey Wainwright, Cheslyn Jones, and Edward Yarnold (London: SPCK, 1989), p. 8.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

reality. This eternal ever-present reality of the glorification of God and the sanctification of humanity is made present through ritual action in the here and now when the Church engages in the liturgy.¹⁴² Quite clearly in this view of liturgy, something is happening, an exchange is taking place, the worshipper is being changed, 'In the dialogue that is set up, in the exchange that takes place, we meet God and are able to enter into union with him; which is the end-purpose of all worship.'¹⁴³ Referring to several examples of the Roman Catholic liturgy Crichton says 'These texts and a hundred others that could be cited show the Church's conviction that when Christians celebrate the liturgy they encounter Christ in his passion, death, and resurrection and are renewed by it.'¹⁴⁴

The church is Christ's Body and the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is because of this manifestation of grace that those who have entered into union with Christ through the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper can participate in the life of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Each one who has been baptized into Christ, has put on Christ, and has participated in Christ's death, burial and resurrection.¹⁴⁵ Wainwright describes liturgy as distinct from doctrine as 'the corporate worship of the Christian churches, and doctrine is the churches' officially formulated teachings. Liturgy takes place in the gathered congregation as a ritual dialogue, in word and gesture, between God and the assembly of believers ...'¹⁴⁶ This is not an individual action but an action of community. This is done in the community of the church as part of her liturgical life. Being united to Christ, the worshipper is united to all the other members of His Body. It is in the Body of Christ that the worshipper can glorify the Father and be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The Church is a corporate reality, an organic structure. This is manifested in the liturgical ritual action. The church has a received official liturgical order. Liturgy is never private: it is a corporate action of Christ and His Body. Liturgical participation is always to be active. To be part of the Body of Christ is to be an active member of the liturgical assembly. The liturgy 'exists to manifest and

¹⁴² 'If then it is true that man approaches God human-wise, it is also true that God has approached man in a human manner, giving himself in his incarnate Son through whom we know him ... and are able to give ourselves to him. That is why the Christian religion and the worship that is its expression is essentially "incarnational" or, what comes to much the same thing, sacramental.' Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴⁵ 'By the liturgical mystery we are actualizing the past event, making it present so that the saving power of Christ can be made available to the worshipper in the here and now.' Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ G. Wainwright, 'Liturgy and Doctrine,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), p. 339

convey the redeeming love of God. The liturgy then is essentially and by its nature sacramental.’¹⁴⁷

While the Roman Catholic Church has been quite consistent in holding to a liturgical form of worship a renewal of liturgical worship began within the ranks of their church and Vatican II has made discussion with Protestant churches a greater possibility. However going back to the time of the reformation, the Protestants revolted against the Roman Catholic liturgy and what the Roman Catholic Church believed was happening in the mass. Wolterstorff is careful to point out that the reformers saw their reaction as reform, they did not begin over again and they did not reform everything.¹⁴⁸ Wolterstorff traces the shape of the liturgy from the early church fathers and identifies a balance of Word and eucharist which he refers to as ‘the enduring structure’.¹⁴⁹ By the time of the reformation this enduring structure no longer endured. The Word had been lost. The reformation sought to recover that Word that was lost and the balance of Word and sacrament.

The liturgy as the Reformers understood and practiced it consists of God acting and us responding through the work of the Spirit. ... The Reformers saw the liturgy as *God’s action and our faithful reception of that action*. The governing idea of the Reformed liturgy is thus twofold: the conviction that to participate in the liturgy is to enter the sphere of God acting, not just of God’s presence.¹⁵⁰

But this reform was short lived. Zwingli upset the balance in 1525 by separating the Word and the sacrament into two separate services. The service for preaching he held forty eight times per year and the service for the Lord’s supper four times per year. From here the sermon became dominant in the liturgy. Wolterstorff gives a telling quote from the early Barth:

We do not any longer even realize that a service without sacraments is one which is outwardly incomplete. As a rule we hold such outwardly incomplete services as if it were perfectly natural to do so. What right have we to do that? We may ask the Roman Catholic church why she celebrates mass without preaching or without proper preaching, but we are asked ourselves what right we have to do what we do. Is there not a pressing danger that by omitting the natural beginning and end of a true service the services we hold are incomplete inwardly and in essence as well? Would

¹⁴⁷ Crichton, ‘A Theology of Worship’, p. 23.

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, ‘The Reformed Liturgy,’ in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), p. 277.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

the sermon not be delivered and listened to quite differently and would we not offer thanks during the service quite differently, if everything outwardly and visibly began with baptism and moved towards the Lord's Supper? Why do the numerous movements and attempts to bring the liturgy of the Reformed church up to date ... prove without exception so unfruitful? Is it not just because they do not fix their attention on this fundamental defect, the incompleteness of our usual service i.e. its lack of sacraments.¹⁵¹

But there were more than theological considerations at play. The modernist mindset also shares some responsibility for the rejection of much of the liturgy. In considering a theology of worship Crichton discusses how primitive man reached out in awe to worship a transcendent being, 'Actions, gestures, symbols expressive of a reality they could but dimly grasp, song, and dance were the means he felt necessary to express his worship.'¹⁵² In contrast to modern man, this primitive man did not sense a need for a rational theory to justify his actions.¹⁵³

From right across the church spectrum there is a desire expressed to return to a more ritualistic way of worship.¹⁵⁴ The eucharist has become more central to a broader range of church traditions.¹⁵⁵

Attention now turns to the scene in Scotland to consider how the liturgical renewal cause involved Torrance. As the liturgical movement was getting underway in the late nineteenth century, voices were already being heard in the Scottish Church. Forrester notes that 'From the early twentieth century onwards, two movements have had an increasing impact on the understanding and practice of Christian Worship in

¹⁵¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹⁵² Crichton, 'A Theology of Worship', p. 6.

¹⁵³ Leithart decries the anti-sacramental nature of the modernist era. 'Modernity is a revolt against ritual, and the modern city is an unprecedented attempt to form a civic community without a festive centre.' Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, ID.: Canon Press, 2003), p. 71.

¹⁵⁴ Anthony Cross speaks of how many charismatic Baptists want to consider the sacramental nature of ordination, ministry and preaching. He adds that Clark Pinnock extends this list to consider the sacramental nature of singing, prayer, praise etc.. Seeing the whole of worship and the liturgy in this way is not too dissimilar to the Roman Catholic view which Cross indicates that Pinnock is in agreement with. Cross says 'the divine work in the sacraments needs to be engaged by the human response. To this end, he (Pinnock) concurs with Vatican II that faith is also required: 'In order that the sacred liturgy may produce its full effect, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions ..., that they cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain.' Cross, 'Being Open to God's Sacramental Work', p. 357. Bowden speaks of how in the mid twentieth century 'liturgical revision has been a major preoccupation of all the churches, Catholic and Protestant alike.' John Bowden, *Edward Schillebeeckx: Portrait of a Theologian* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983), p. 39.

¹⁵⁵ 'Many church traditions have followed Roman Catholicism in making the Eucharist the focal point of worship each Sunday, and it has been an important symbol of the nature of the church, the character of its community and its commitment to a life of sacrifice for the outside world.' *Ibid.*

Scotland – the ecumenical movement and the liturgical movement.¹⁵⁶ As a result of the reformation in Scotland and the austerity of Puritan influences from the *Westminster Directory of Worship* Scottish church buildings were plain and the liturgy was minimalist and largely dependent on the whims and fancies of the local minister.¹⁵⁷ Cheyne believed that the emptiness of the liturgy of the Scottish Church began when they under Puritan influence abandoned the reformed liturgy.¹⁵⁸ In the nineteenth century there was a distinct lack of interest with both ministers and church members in the liturgical practices that existed in other churches or that had existed throughout the long history of the church. Cheyne speaks of a liturgical revolution and this was laid by three men in the early nineteenth century, Thomas Erskine, John McLeod Campbell and Edward Irving.

Each of them in his own way questioned the traditional Scottish approach to religion and – by implication – the worship that went with it. Together, they had the effect of warning against an over-intellectualised and abstract piety, discrediting a degenerate Puritanism, balancing the doctrine of the Atonement with an equal emphasis upon the Incarnation, ...¹⁵⁹

The union of the old Church of Scotland in 1929 had an impact upon the worship of the church.

While some hoped for a greater degree of uniformity and central leadership, if not direction in matters of worship in the united Church than had been practised in either of the component denominations, others, and probably a majority, were resolved to defend what had in practice become the unfettered freedom of ministers to conduct worship as they saw fit, allowing diversity and even idiosyncrasy.¹⁶⁰

Little control was exerted by presbyteries or the General Assembly in the area of worship which gave rise to pressure groups seeking to steer or influence a course.

¹⁵⁶ Duncan Forrester, 'In Spirit and in Truth: Christian Worship in Context,' in *Worship and Liturgy in Context: Studies and Case Studies in Theology and Practice*, eds. Duncan Forrester & Doug Gay (London: SCM Press, 2009), p. 18.

¹⁵⁷ See Nigel Yates, *Preaching, Word and Sacrament: Scottish Church Interiors 1560-1860* (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

¹⁵⁸ A. C. Cheyne, *Transforming of the Kirk: Victorian Scotlands Religious Revolution* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1983), p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89. See also Brown for the role of Robert Lee and the Church Service Society. Stewart J. Brown, 'The Scoto-Catholic Movement in Presbyterian Worship c. 1850-c. 1920' in *Worship and Liturgy in Context: Studies and Case Studies in Theology and Practice*, eds. Duncan Forrester & Doug Gay (London: SCM Press, 2009), p. 153.

¹⁶⁰ Duncan Forrester, 'Worship since 1929,' in *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*, eds. Duncan B. Forrester & Douglas M. Murray (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 177.

The most prominent and significant of these ‘pressure groups’ was the Church Service Society ... The dominant tone of the Society had become by 1929 more high church, and it exerted very considerable influence in the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion, most of whose leaders were members of the Society.¹⁶¹

One such product of the Church Service Society was J.H. Worthorspoon’s *Religious values in the Sacraments*. Worthorspoon’s aspiration was to see a more catholic practice and understanding of worship in the Church of Scotland. ‘Wotherspoon roots his thinking in reformed theology but blends with this a concept of a sacramental universe and other ideas borrowed from Anglicans such as Charles Gore and William Temple.’¹⁶² Wotherspoon also produced a *Manual of Church Doctrine*. This was later revised by Torrance and the two editions are compared and contrasted in Appendix Two, providing useful insight into Torrance’s thinking as attention is paid to what he believes is necessary to change.

This liturgical renewal was driven along by the ecumenical movement and the liturgical renewal movement in turn supported the ecumenical cause. Wolterstorff explains how this happened as he explores the genius of the reformed liturgy developing his argument to insist that there really is one. He remarks that,

During the last quarter century or so a most remarkable thing has happened: all the mainline traditions of Christendom with the exception of the Orthodox and the Anabaptist, have engaged in liturgical reform. And even more striking: all the liturgies recommended are virtually identical in structure.¹⁶³

This convergence in content and style is not merely a result of comparing notes but rather each tradition returning to the same sources. Wolterstorff also acknowledges the impact that the ecumenical movement has had on liturgical practice,

Not only has coalescence emerged around liturgical practice. After decades of discussion, a remarkable and gratifying convergence has also emerged in liturgical theology, represented most recently by the document of the World Council of Churches entitled Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM).¹⁶⁴

This convergence in the ecumenical movement and the liturgical renewal movement is two way. As the liturgy begins to sound similar, worshippers begin to feel more at

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Wolterstorff, ‘The Reformed Liturgy’, p. 275.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 276.

home in the public services of other denominations. New ecumenical discussions involved consideration of theological issues and patterns of worship. Additionally, as Heron points out, in reference to the new Orthodox self-awareness arising through interaction with theology in the west, the unity of the church was closely connected with the eucharist. '[T]he sacrament of the Eucharist: whenever and wherever the Eucharist was celebrated, the whole church was present in microcosm in the local community.'¹⁶⁵ The eucharist expressed the unity of the body and baptism was associated with the initiation into that united body.

Both the ecumenical movement and the liturgical renewal movement gave prominence to the doctrine of baptism. Torrance participated in the Church Society¹⁶⁶ and shared its aspiration to remove the emptiness of the Puritan structure to Scottish worship. Torrance also used the enterprise of liturgical revision as an opportunity to include his soteriological perspective as is evident in his revision of a *Manual of Church Doctrine* (see Appendix Two). The liturgical renewal movement has a double significance for Torrance's view of baptism. First, Torrance's interest and involvement in the liturgical debate which involved the liturgy of baptism and second, Barth's opposition to liturgy significantly influenced by his view of baptism. It is interesting to note that when the ecumenical movement was getting underway and when conciliatory statements were being produced on the subject of baptism, that it was then that Barth added his voice to Brunner's rejection of infant baptism. Did Barth sense that the theology that he so opposed was gaining momentum under the ecumenical movement and the liturgical renewal movement? While Barth was involved in the ecumenical movement his views seem more designed to oppose it. This presents a dilemma for Torrance because he views Barth's theology to lie at the heart of church unity.

1.2.3 Barth and Barth's Changing views on Baptism

(i) Barth's influence on Torrance

The influence that Barth had upon Torrance is evident from the way that Torrance describes Barth's impact upon the theological scene. Torrance speaks of Barth's input into theology as a 'Copernican' revolution.¹⁶⁷

Torrance did his doctoral research¹⁶⁸ under Karl Barth, but before this direct contact Torrance's mother provided him with a copy of Barth's *Credo* at the

¹⁶⁵ Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology*, p. 180.

¹⁶⁶ 'Record,' *The Church Service Society*.

¹⁶⁷ McKim, *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, p. 9.

beginning of his studies in New College, Edinburgh.¹⁶⁹ In New College it was his professor of Christian Dogmatics, H.R. Mackintosh, who commended the study of Barth. As soon as Barth's first volume of *Church Dogmatics* appeared in English, Torrance obtained a copy. Torrance describes his reaction to Barth's theology, 'I was immensely exhilarated by the insight Barth gave me into the ontology and objectivity of the Word of God as God himself in his revelation, and by Barth's presentation of dogmatics as a science.'¹⁷⁰

Torrance had found in Schleiermacher and Augustine a beauty in their architectonic arrangement of theology, but underlying both theologians, for Torrance, there were disturbing presuppositions. Torrance portrays his study of theology as a quest for an architectonic structure that avoids all alien presuppositions and allows actual knowledge of God to be reached through his self-revelation in Christ and in his Spirit. It would be to Barth that Torrance would constantly look for support, as he sought a way forward.¹⁷¹

As Torrance's career developed, and he was later to take up a number of teaching posts in New College, Edinburgh, he was to play a significant role in bringing Barth to the English speaking world.¹⁷² Torrance always held Barth in high esteem and sought to remain faithful to Barth's theology.

(ii) Barth's First Baptismal View

Barth's view on baptism is significant in any consideration of Torrance's doctrine of baptism because of the profound influence that Barth had on Torrance. Whether or not Barth's work on baptism is considered significant in itself or not, it commands attention simply because of the stature that Barth has as a theologian. Barth held three views on baptism over his publishing lifetime.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology*.

¹⁶⁹ McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁰ McKim, *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, p. 52.

¹⁷¹ Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology*.

¹⁷² A number of authors have raised questions about Torrance's interpretation of Barth. McPake, *H.R. Mackintosh. T.F. Torrance and the Reception of the Theology of Karl Barth in Scotland*; George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹⁷³ 'Barth's theology of baptism underwent important, and even dramatic changes from the first edition of his commentary on Romans to the final fragment of the *Church Dogmatics* published shortly before his death.' Daniel Migliore, 'Reforming the Theology and Practice of Baptism: The Challenge of Karl Barth,' in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, eds. David Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), p. 494.

This section will identify and describe Barth's three views of baptism; sacramental¹⁷⁴ infant baptism, sacramental believers' baptism and non-sacramental believers' baptism. It will identify a doctrinal development during the period of the first phase of Barth's baptismal pilgrimage which sets the scene for the second and third phase.

Barth published two works on the subject of baptism. The work that particularly fuelled the European debate was published in 1943 where Barth rejected infant baptism. Barth's view on baptism was to change again in the final volume of his unfinished *Church Dogmatics*. These two publications present Barth's second and third views of baptism. Barth's second and third views of baptism are easily accessible because he was dealing directly with the issue.

The first time that references to baptism can be found in Barth is at the stage where he is protesting against liberal theology. Barth's first view of baptism can be found in his publications prior to the early 1930s and the publication of the first volume of *Church Dogmatics*.

Webster acknowledges that Barth's early espousal of the classical reformed understanding of sacraments in general and baptism in particular was a rather uneasy affair.¹⁷⁵

Comments related to Barth's first view of baptism can be found in the following works: Barth's commentary on the book of Romans, the aborted *Christian Dogmatics*,¹⁷⁶ *Göttingen Dogmatics*, *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten*,¹⁷⁷ *Christian Dogmatics in Outline*, and the first two volumes of *Church Dogmatics*. This first view is more in keeping with Torrance's view. Barth demonstrates a defensive preoccupation with stating what baptism is not.

In Barth's commentary on Romans he notes that Christian baptism has its origins in Hellenism. Barth uses the terms 'sign and seal' while referring to baptism in

¹⁷⁴ Barth describes baptism as a sacrament, 'baptism is a sacrament of truth and holiness; and it is a sacrament, because it is the sign which directs us to God's revelation of eternal life and declares, not merely the Christian "myth", but – the Word of God. It does not merely signify eternal reality, but is eternal reality, because it points significantly beyond its own concreteness. Baptism mediates the new creation: it is not itself grace, but from first to last a means of grace.' Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1934; repr., Translated from Sixth Edition), p. 192.

¹⁷⁵ J. Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 118.

¹⁷⁶ Use will be made here of Torrance's English translations of quotes as this work as at the present time has only been published in German. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology*.

¹⁷⁷ Use will be made here of Migliore's English translation of the quotes from this work as at the present time this work has only been published in German. Migliore, 'Reforming the Theology and Practice of Baptism.'

Romans chapter 6 in his commentary on Romans. To develop his description Barth refers back to circumcision in his comments on Romans chapter 4. Barth speaks of baptism as a concrete event in time, 'Baptism is an occurrence belonging to the concrete world of religion.'¹⁷⁸

Barth has a sacramental view of circumcision. Abraham's circumcision does not condition or effect a relationship but rather witnesses to that relationship, yet, 'Abraham's circumcision is however, not merely a token, for it also effects its purpose, namely, the faith of the uncircumcised.'¹⁷⁹

Baptism for Barth is not grace but rather the sacrament or visible word which God has given to point to the Word of God as made creatively actual by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though Barth speaks of baptism as a sign he sees that baptism is not without its power. Since baptism is a sign that points to the Word of God it is therefore a sacramental sign. Grace is present in baptism, though Barth adds a further cautionary word to make clear that baptism is not grace itself. 'Baptism mediates the new creation: it is not itself grace, but from first to last a means of grace.'¹⁸⁰ Not many sentences further Barth seems to advance his thinking in a way that appears to contradict what he has already said. In a way that comes close to Calvin, Barth says that baptism is not only a means of grace but that baptism is what it signifies.¹⁸¹

So, for Barth, through baptism the recipient is stripped of his identity as a sinner. The old identity as the person who sins wilfully in thought, word and deed is removed and that person is freed from the power of sin, not only from the power of sin but from the status of being a sinner. As the old identity is dead so the person is born anew in Christ. The one possessing this new life is now totally in the image of God and now incapable of sin. This raises some issues because this is not the reality that is seen or experienced. But this reality, reasons Barth, is not seen or made apparent to ourselves or others, it is something that is only seen by the eyes of God. So the life is not really a life free from sin in this concrete sphere, but a life of hope in the future that the Christian will become in experience that which he is in actuality. The grace that Barth refers to is a grace that changes the status of the person in the eyes of God. There is no real change in the person or grace that they can recognise. Barth does not carry this idea on beyond his commentary on Romans. In *Christian Dogmatics* and

¹⁷⁸ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 192.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Church Dogmatics Barth shifts the emphasis to baptism producing a cognitive awareness, and in *Church Dogmatics* baptism is presented as a real act on the person.¹⁸²

In the early stages of Barth's first view on baptism, humanity has no role to play. This supports Barth's view of infant baptism as something passive. Nothing is done in humanity: 'That life of ours which is positively conformed to Jesus is the life which is his with Christ in God, and which is only "ours" here and now as the eternal future.'¹⁸³

In further support of infant baptism Barth asks,

Does it make any sense to be ashamed of infant baptism on the grounds that human reason and experience are absent in this act? As if they are not always lacking with respect to what this means. As if even the baptism of the most mature, most pious, and most rational adult could be in principle anything other than 'infant' baptism...¹⁸⁴

In *The Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth challenges what he calls 'the modern theology of experience'. To do this he argues from the example of infant baptism the objective nature of what occurred,

Modern theologians are also advised from time to time, instead of engaging in apologetics, to remember that when they were infants it was once said to them on the lips of the church: 'I baptise thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' This address and being addressed, at any rate, took place without any confusion with experience being able to slip in. We did not (fortunately) experience our baptism, yet we *are* baptized.¹⁸⁵

In *Christian Dogmatics*, Barth's first attempt at an introduction to dogmatics, Barth discusses baptism in the context of Revelation.¹⁸⁶ Barth discusses the objective nature of revelation and the unity of revelation and reconciliation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. 'From the incarnation Barth addresses himself to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as constituting the subjective possibility of Revelation. ... This Spirit

¹⁸² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance Vol. I/1 (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1956), p. 154.

¹⁸³ Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 197.

¹⁸⁴ Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 67.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.

¹⁸⁶ Reference will be made here to Torrance's summary of *Christian Dogmatics* in Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology*.

comes to us as Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer.’¹⁸⁷ At this stage in Barth’s understanding,

The great sign of this Barth sees in baptism, and to be sure, in infant baptism, for it is there that we see so clearly that the subjective possibility of our knowledge of God is derived from beyond us in the objective act of the Spirit opening us up subjectively from below.¹⁸⁸

In this first view of baptism Barth does not give infant baptism a covenantal basis or provide any kind of biblical support, but in the context of God’s communication to humanity, infant baptism strengthens Barth’s opposition to any subjective aspect of salvation. While allowing that Barth is not dealing specifically with baptism, he is naturally inclined towards infant baptism because it appears to be the most obvious deduction from the objective bias favoured by Barth in the objective/subjective tension in how God communicates with humanity.

This view of baptism in the early Barth is important to Torrance’s view of baptism. There are three important themes that emerge from Barth’s view of baptism that will later be evident in Torrance. First, the emphasis upon the objective nature of baptism; second, the passive nature of the recipient which is ideally illustrated in infant baptism, and third, Barth does not provide a covenantal basis for infant baptism but rather finds a basis for baptism in the theology of incarnation. These are the threads of a defence of infant baptism in Barth that Torrance will later take up.

(iii) Barth’s Second Baptismal View

Medgett identifies the early 1930s as the time when Barth started to question Calvin’s doctrine of baptism.¹⁸⁹ By 1938, Barth had rejected infant baptism completely. Busch records a letter that Barth wrote to a friend. Busch says

In 1938 Barth acted as Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Basle. During the summer semester he not only continued to lecture on the Dogmatics but also lectured on 1 Peter. In his discussion groups he pressed on with Wolleb, and in a seminar on baptism for the first time came to completely negative conclusions over Calvin’s arguments for infant baptism, ...¹⁹⁰

However the impact of Barth’s rejection of infant baptism was only fully felt after his lecture in 1943.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Medgett, *Barth and Baptism: The Changing Shape of His Baptismal Theology*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁰ Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, pp. 285-286.

Barth's *The teaching of the Church on Baptism* is the English translation of the Gwatt lecture given on 7 May 1943 to Swiss theological students. It is widely known as the announcement of Barth's break with infant baptism in favour of believers' baptism. In the 1943 lecture Barth still holds to a sacramental view of baptism but he is laying the theological ground work, preparing the way for the view that he will espouse in CD IV.4.¹⁹¹ Barth's critique of the practice of infant baptism in this lecture caused quite a reaction.

Barth opens the lecture by stating in summary form how he views baptism;

Christian Baptism is in essence the representation (*Abbild*) of a man's renewal through his participation by means of the power of the Holy Spirit in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and therewith the representation of man's association with Christ, with the covenant of grace which is concluded and realised in Him, and with the fellowship of His Church.¹⁹²

Barth's introductory remarks involve a discussion of the mode of baptism concluding that the proper mode is immersion.

Barth refers to Romans 6 as describing 'a supremely critical happening – a real event whose light and shade fall upon the candidate in the course of his baptism.'¹⁹³ This is no less than the candidate's participation in the past historical event of Christ's death and resurrection. What happens to the candidate happens in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For it is the Holy Spirit, proceeding from Jesus Christ and moving this particular man, which unites him to Jesus Christ like a body to its head, making him belong to Jesus Christ and making everything that Jesus Christ is and does belong to him.¹⁹⁴

The candidate is brought into union with Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Barth distinguishes baptism of the Holy Spirit from water baptism. He also places an emphasis upon the candidate's faith. The candidate is born again and becomes a citizen of the new Age, declared free from their sins and therefore consecrated to Christ. Baptism bears witness to God, Jesus Christ, the covenant, grace and the Church. This is 'the event in which God in Jesus Christ makes a man His child and a

¹⁹¹ 'The lecture was regarded as primarily concerned with advocating 'believers' baptism' in place of infant baptism. However, the theological foundations were carefully set out which were to lead to the doctrine as expressed in CD IV.4.' Bryan D. Spinks, *Karl Barth's Teaching on Baptism: Its Development, Antecedents and the Liturgical Factor*, *Ecclesia Orans* 14 (1997), p. 263.

¹⁹² Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1948), p. 9.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

member of His covenant, awakening faith through His grace and calling a man to life in the Church.’¹⁹⁵ Baptism testifies to the candidate what has already been declared through preaching. Barth uses a number of terms to try and capture what the essence of baptism is, using representation, sign and seal. Since baptism has to be primarily thought of as a symbol then Barth opts for the word ‘witness’ to capture the essence of baptism.¹⁹⁶

Regarding the efficacy of baptism Barth argues that it resides in the word and work of Jesus Christ. Baptism is not merely a ‘dead or dumb representation, but a living and expressive one. Its potency lies in the fact that it comprehends the whole movement of sacred history (Heilsgeschichte) ...’¹⁹⁷

Barth’s sacramental understanding arises from this understanding of baptism’s potency, ‘All that it intends and actually affects is the result of this potency.’¹⁹⁸ The power of baptism is exercised in a cognitive way ‘as it shows to a man that objective reality to which he himself belongs (and of which it is a sign) ...’¹⁹⁹ Webster, referring to Barth’s comments on the potency of baptism, speaks of the ‘remarkably strong statements concerning the “absolute efficacy” of baptism’²⁰⁰ that Barth makes.

In all these acts by the church, ‘The potency of baptism depends upon Christ who is the chief actor in it. It has no independent potency in itself.’²⁰¹ Here Barth stresses that baptism cannot be manipulated by humanity. ‘If baptism is a true witness, that means that it is living and expressive not in its own power, but in the power of Him to whom it bears witness and by whose command it is carried out.’²⁰² Barth speaks of the importance of baptism and its necessity as it relates to Christ’s command. Yet baptism is not necessary for salvation.

Barth speaks of the sacramental dimension of the word and work of Jesus Christ and faith in Christ. In this context he criticizes Zwingli. ‘It is because this is absent in Zwingli that his baptismal teaching – like that regarding the Lord’s Supper – is so strangely flat and cold, and so unsatisfactory in relation to the New Testament references.’²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁰⁰ Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, p. 123.

²⁰¹ Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, p. 19.

²⁰² Ibid., pp. 21-22.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 28. Torrance uses this term ‘flat’

Barth finds it strange that baptism has

never been understood in principle as a glorifying of God, that is as a moment of His self-revelation ... While baptism does its cognitive work, while the divine-human reality illuminates a man, making him an enlightened one, the far greater and primary thing occurs: God receives glory in that He Himself, as man recognises Him in truth, once more secures His just due on earth.²⁰⁴

This takes place within the community of the Church causing the emphasis to move from the individual to the community. Barth speaks of a liturgical consequence of this community principle. 'The practical liturgical consequence is clear: in principle baptism cannot be celebrated as a private act or a family festival.'²⁰⁵

Barth sums up his understanding of baptism as he has set out his view to this point. For the candidate,

With divine certainty there is given to him for the glorifying of God in the upbuilding of the Church of Jesus Christ, the promise that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the grace of God avails for him and is re-born; that, on the ground of this happening, even he may have assurance of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit; that even his sins are forgiven; that he also is a child of God; that the hope of eternal life is his also.²⁰⁶

There flows from this privilege and blessing the responsibility upon the candidate to respond with 'his pledge of allegiance regarding the grateful service demanded of him.'²⁰⁷

Barth then turns his attention to the order and practice of baptism to stress that neither the order and practice of the Church nor the understanding of the candidate 'can make the baptism of a person, once it has been performed, ineffective and therefore invalid, or can lead to or justify a call to re-baptism according to a better order and practice.'²⁰⁸ However, that said, this does not mean that Barth does not value a thorough consideration of the order and practice of baptism.

For Barth the baptismal candidate is now an active partner. The candidate has an active role to play. 'Baptism then is a picture in which, man, it is true, is not the most important figure but is certainly the second most important.'²⁰⁹ But Barth warns that

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 32. Such a view would have to address the baptisms of the Ethiopian Chancellor and Saul of Tarsus.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

while this is considered as a human act it is primarily a free act of Christ. It is because the candidate is touched by God that response becomes a possibility.

Barth acknowledges his agreement with Schleiermacher, who argued that infant baptism can only be complete upon the candidate's profession of faith, where such profession serves as the act which consummates the baptism. Barth then raises the question, whether or not infant baptism is really a full baptism. He provides his own answer, 'Is it not rather, and notoriously, half-baptism? And, on the other hand, what right have we to attribute to confirmation the significance of a half-sacrament?'²¹⁰

Barth speaks of the controversy of whether a church has to be a 'true church' for its baptism to be a 'true baptism' and then speaks of the candidate.

Baptism without the willingness and readiness of the baptized is true, effectual and effective baptism, but it is not correct; it is not done in obedience, it is not administered according to proper order and therefore it is necessarily clouded baptism.²¹¹

This is where Barth raised the most debate. A prime example of the 'clouded baptism' is the practice of infant baptism in Barth's opinion. 'Neither by exegesis nor from the nature of the case can it be established that the baptized person can be a merely passive instrument.'²¹²

For Barth the New Testament only speaks of the baptism of one who has heard the word and has come in faith. 'In the sphere of the New Testament, one is not brought to baptism; one comes to baptism.'²¹³

Barth calls for a change in the churches regarding their stance on baptism.

What is wanted is very simple: instead of the present infant-baptism, a baptism which on the part of the baptized is a responsible act. If it is to be natural, the candidate, instead of being a passive object of baptism, must become once more the free partner of Jesus Christ, that is, freely deciding, freely confessing, declaring on his part his willingness and readiness.²¹⁴

Barth draws his lecture to an end by summing up the essence of baptism.

It is the sign of hope, granted by the Church as part of its service to the baptized, as certainly as it is the sign of Jesus Christ (of the death which He once experienced and of the resurrection of His complete body which also He once experienced) and also the sign

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 48. The idea that infant baptism without confirmation being only a half sacrament is raised by Dix, Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

²¹¹ Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, p. 40.

²¹² Ibid., p. 41.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 42.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

of the individual in question. It is therefore an eschatological sign. That is to say: the appearance of Jesus Christ as the goal and end of the period begun with His resurrection. It designates the baptized as one who although he must die, has in front of him his real life, eternal life in the new Age of the coming Kingdom – and this life only. Precisely as an eschatological sign, it points also into the heart of the life which the baptized is living here and now; to his past, and to his future at the time of that Aeon, which is present with us and hastening towards its goal and end. It points to his past here and now; that is, however, to the forgiveness of his sins, which has happened in Jesus Christ. And it points to his future here and now, that is, however, to his intention to shine to the glory of God as one who has been forgiven out of free compassion.²¹⁵

Wainwright identifies Barth's focus on the cognitive aspect of baptism as Barth's major development.

Through baptism, Jesus Christ speaks and acts (it is Barth's massive assertion) with a *cognitive* purpose (not a causative or generative, as Romans, Lutherans, and Anglicans maintain) assuring the believer that salvation is already his and telling him that he is now pledged to the obedient service of his Lord for the glorifying of God in the upbuilding of the Church.²¹⁶

As Barth considers the potency of baptism, he stresses the irresistible nature of baptism;

what baptism effects, can manifestly, in the nature of the case, not be dependent – so far as it takes and concerns the candidate – either on the quantity of piety or impiety with which he receives the sacrament, or on the Christian perfection or imperfection with which he afterwards, as receiver of the sacrament, sets to work and proves himself.²¹⁷

However, when this is viewed against Barth's increased emphasis on the part of the active human partner a new tension appears. Barth stresses the active partner role using strong language, saying that the understanding of baptism and particularly any emphasis of a passive role, such as an unconscious faith of an infant must lead to the rejection of infant baptism, 'if baptism is to avoid the character of an act of violence.'²¹⁸

Webster identifies the reason why Barth abandoned infant baptism at this stage in his thinking,

²¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 62-63.

²¹⁶ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Christian Initiation* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), p. 46.

²¹⁷ Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, p. 57.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 47.

Barth distances himself from infant baptism in the 1943 lecture, it is not only because he fears a notion of baptismal efficacy *ex opere operato*, but also because he is already tying together generative divine action and the notion of moral obligation.²¹⁹

According to Migliore

Barth takes issue with the practice of infant baptism because, he now argues, it obscures the freedom and responsibility of the person baptized. He contends that this practice amounts to treating the baptizand as a mere passive object rather than an active partner in the covenant of grace.²²⁰

(iv) Barth's Third Baptismal View

Barth's last publication was his final part volume CD IV/4 – *The Fragment on Baptism*. Here Barth outlined his third and final view of baptism where he rejects the sacramental understanding of baptism. In this view God does not confer grace in baptism, but baptism is solely the human response to the work of the Holy Spirit.

In 1963 Barth received eighty members of the Württemberg Church Fraternity in Basle. It took the form of a question and answer session. Barth was asked the following question,

To what extent are the sacraments and the so-called ministerial offices proclamation and therefore unconditionally offered, applied and granted to all, and to what extent are they part of the believer's response and of the application of faith ...?²²¹

Barth's answer was

To that I would answer that the sacraments are nothing whatever but response, the response not only of the candidate for baptism but also of the congregation. What takes place in baptism, communion and proclamation is all response.²²²

Not long after that Barth was to release CD IV/4 where he would deny that baptism was a sacrament. In CD IV/4 Barth's consideration of baptism falls into two parts. In the first part Barth discusses baptism of the Holy Spirit and in the second part he discusses baptism with water. Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the act of God and baptism with water is the human response. This division is in keeping with Barth's view that the act of God, as free act, always precedes and initiates the human response.

²¹⁹ Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, p. 125.

²²⁰ Migliore, 'Reforming the Theology and Practice of Baptism', pp. 497-498.

²²¹ Karl Barth, *Fragments Grave and Gay*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London: Collins: The Fontana Library, 1971), p. 88.

²²² Ibid.

For Barth, baptism with the Holy Spirit means that there can be such a thing as the Christian life. Through the work of the Holy Spirit the person is enabled to participate in the grace of God, because God brings about a change. This divine change is wrought through the history of Jesus Christ and the person becomes a new person. This divine change is universal in the whole of humanity but is only recognised and confessed by Christians. 'In the work of the Holy Spirit the history manifested to all men in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is manifest and present to a specific man as his own salvation history.'²²³

What happens in the baptism with the Spirit happens because of the work of Jesus Christ. This does not come about because of the work of the church or the work of the person. The call of God demands a response but that response is only possible because of the divine change that has already taken place. It is the baptism with the Holy Spirit which must be thought of as the means of grace. Water baptism is merely a response to the Holy Spirit's effectual work. This work of the Holy Spirit demands a response of gratitude where this gratitude embraces an ethical obedience to God's law.

Barth then turns to discuss the meaning of water baptism which takes up the last eighty percent of the book. Water baptism is the individual's response to the grace of God. It is a free, obedient response to the command of God. Barth plunges into a lengthy section where he presents the exegetical evidence for baptism. On the mode of baptism he agrees that the baptism of Jesus was by immersion and that the meaning of the New Testament term implies dipping, but that the form is not what is significant but rather the idea of washing with water is what should be grasped. Barth attaches no power to the water itself but reasons that water is used because of the human practice of washing with water.

Barth states that baptism is a minor theme in the New Testament which only appears to have a dominant place in the ministry of John the Baptist. Water baptism is a response to the divine Word which has come upon the candidate and is an affirmation of the expressed *Yes* of faith to the *Yes* of God.

The basis of baptism for Barth may have some connection with the command of Christ in *The Gospel Commission*, though he expresses some concern related to issues of textual criticism. That aside, for Barth, the fundamental basis for baptism is the history and example of Jesus Christ in his baptism in the river Jordan. 'It is in

²²³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Christian Life (Fragment)*, p. 27.

this event that we are to seek the true basis of Christian baptism which is then declared and formulated as such in the saying in Mt, 28:19.²²⁴ In Jesus' baptism Jesus freely placed himself under the Lordship of God, he freely identified his solidarity with fallen humanity and undertook to do God's work for humanity and humanity's work for God. This submission to the Lordship of God is entered into through assuming the office of Messiah, Saviour and Mediator.

Through his baptism, Jesus though he was sinless confessed humanity's sins and made them his own. Jesus' baptism saw him enter his twofold ministry as God for humanity and humanity for God.

Barth then considers the goal of baptism. He asks what the Christian community and the candidate have in view when they baptise or are baptised?²²⁵ In response Barth replies that the goal of baptism has got to be sought beyond the act itself for its goal is transcendent rather than immanent. The transcendent goal is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The meaning of Christian baptism has got to be found beyond the meaning of John's baptism. Christian baptism stresses the coming of the kingdom of God. The kingdom has been inaugurated and baptism derives from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Christian baptism not only speaks of salvation but also judgement because Jesus the judge has come. Baptism also has a communal aspect to it as it gathers the candidate into the church, 'It is thus baptism in one body which is the Church of both Jews and Gentiles.'²²⁶

Having considered both the basis and the goal of baptism Barth sums up by saying 'Jesus Christ, who is the basis of baptism, is also the one goal which is distinct from baptism as such but which is immovably set for it.'²²⁷

Barth asserts that baptism is not a sacrament. Baptism 'is not itself, however, the bearer, means, or instrument of grace. Baptism responds to a mystery, the sacrament of the history of Jesus Christ, of His resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is not itself, however, a mystery or sacrament.'²²⁸ Barth is in no doubt that he stands in opposition to the vast majority of the church. Though there are many differences in the various traditions, Barth recognises that they have this in agreement that the meaning of baptism lies in the action of God that takes place in

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

²²⁵ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 89.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

the administration of baptism by the church. Barth reasons that this abolishes the action of the candidate whom God frees to respond to him in obedience.

Barth says, 'If, however, baptism is not a sacrament, its meaning, as indicated in the preliminary thesis, is to be sought in its character as a true and genuine human action which responds to the divine act and word.'²²⁹ Barth aligns himself with Zwingli at this point,

We for our part cannot deny that both negatively and positively Zwingli was basically right. Hence we can raise little objection if it occurs to someone that the doctrine presented here should be labelled (either approvingly or critically) Neo-Zwinglian, even though its development does not in fact owe anything to Zwingli's influence.²³⁰

While Barth concedes that his view is Neo- Zwinglian he considers that he understands 'Zwingli better than he understood himself or could make himself understood.'²³¹

Everything that Barth now teaches demands the rejection of infant baptism because it would undermine the free response of obedience to God. Barth considers that what led the reformers to retain the practice of infant baptism was their commitment to the idea of a State Church.

Webster identifies the underlying theological basis for Barth's third view saying that here Barth 'offers a Christological and ethical rather than a salvific or sacramental, interpretation of Christian Baptism.'²³²

The crux of Barth's changing views of baptism appears to centre on what he considers to be how the objectivity of the death and resurrection of Christ becomes a subjective reality in the life of the Christian. Barth guards against any possible mediation of any created thing or being becoming involved in the transition from the objective to the subjective. Roman Catholic scholar Chauvet says,

In systematically contradicting classic sacramental theology, Barth shows his almost visceral fear of calling into question God's free and gratuitous sovereign action by having it enter into 'synergistic' cooperation with the human action the Church performs in the sacraments. Now, one wonders how it is that the Christocentrism

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 130.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*.

which is such a prominent feature in his theology did not carry him past this fear.²³³

Barth consistently opposed the Roman Catholic and Liberal idea of mediation, but now he is beginning

to leave behind some of his own earlier affiliation with Reformed sacramental doctrine. Where he had at one time spoken of continuity between Jesus Christ as the 'first sacrament' and creaturely signs ..., Barth now moves to a significantly different affirmation: Jesus Christ is not the first but the only sacrament.²³⁴

Barth's view of baptism is considered here because of the influence that Barth had on Torrance. Torrance is unhappy with Barth's view of baptism and indeed he accuses Barth of embracing the dualism that Barth had rejected in earlier works. While Torrance is critical of Barth's view of baptism his view is nevertheless indebted to Barth. The absence of a covenantal framework is evident in both authors; the tension between the objective and subjective is shared by both Barth and Torrance. The objective baptism of Christ and the recipient of baptism coming into the good of this baptism is seen in Barth and given more prominence by Torrance.

Other critics point to major doctrinal fault-lines running through Barth's theology that lead him to adopt the view of baptism that he describes in CD IV.4. Webster claims that the dualism in Barth's sharp distinction between Spirit Baptism and Water Baptism places his Chalcedonian Christology under some strain.²³⁵ Spinks finds that the liturgical factor is something that Barth was unaware of. 'Barth's lack of serious interest in and knowledge of liturgy prevented him from considering what is actually prayed, which is frequently at variance with dogmatic statements about sacraments.'²³⁶

Spinks is quite dismissive of Barth's view of baptism. He says,

Yet although Markus Barth and Arthur Cochrane, in the context of American Presbyterian sacramental debate, have promoted a fairly consistent Barthian line on baptism, very few theologians have felt the necessity to depart from a more traditional orthodoxy whereby the rite of baptism is a sacrament and potentially a means of divine disclosure.²³⁷

²³³ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Partrick Madigan (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), pp. 538-539.

²³⁴ Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, p. 127.

²³⁵ The strain arises from the fact that while in Barth's view of baptism the human and divine are not confused they are definitely separated.

²³⁶ Spinks, *Karl Barth's Teaching on Baptism: Its Development, Antecedents and the Liturgical Factor*, p. 288.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

1.2.4 Conclusion

The existence of the ecumenical movement has thrust both Barth²³⁸ and Torrance into the debate on baptism but has also provided the opportunity for Torrance to offer the Barthian paradigm as a solution to a new way of thinking about presuppositions that might release the denominations from their divisions. This approach, according to Torrance, will provide the needed help to solve the divisions associated with baptism. The challenge to Torrance arises from the fact that the Barthian paradigm sent Barth and Torrance in two very different directions on the subject of baptism. In fact the timing of Barth's challenge to infant baptism could have potentially damaged the developing ecumenical harmony among the churches. Torrance's efforts involved using Barth's theology to provide a robust defence of infant baptism.

A further divergence between Barth and Torrance is the different approach to liturgy. Torrance was active in the liturgical recovery in the Church of Scotland though not necessarily sharing in all its aspirations.²³⁹

Alan Torrance finds Barth's anti-sacramentalism to be firmly rooted in a flawed Trinitarian theology and his narrow view of revelation. He argues that Barth's liking to use the term *Seinsweise* as opposed to person when speaking of the members of the trinity and his restrictive revelation-orientation of his theology leads 'to an inadequate interpretation of God's self-communication.'²⁴⁰ Alan Torrance relates the idea of person, human participation and the sacraments and finds this a flaw in Barth's theology.

At the very centre of a theology of personhood, therefore, stands the acknowledgement of the ecclesial dynamic of God's grace – a dynamic that is integrally bound up with the *praxis* of the sacraments. Through the event of baptism the unconditionality of grace and our participation by it in the redeemed life of the New Humanity, as perfected in the Second Adam and High Priest of our confession is written into our existence. We are baptised into the Body of Christ prior to the satisfaction of any conceivable epistemic or semantic condition on our part. As such, infant baptism constitutes – as Luther saw but Barth failed to appreciate –

²³⁸ Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, p. 25.

²³⁹ Torrance's involvement in revising the liturgy was limited to merely reflecting his soteriology in that liturgy. This will be given further attention in a discussion on Torrance's revision of a church manual in chapter Four.

²⁴⁰ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 1.

a critically significant means of our personal liberation to live in the light of grace.²⁴¹

Alasdair Heron relates how the cultural and political turmoil of Germany are of direct relevance for Barth's theology.²⁴² Given Kierkegaard's opposition to a state church and indiscriminate infant baptism and his influence upon Barth, this has served to shape Barth's view of baptism. Barth seems unable to free himself from the abuses of religion and faith that he observes and he is driven by an agenda to protect God, protect revelation and limit any interaction of God with humanity to prevent humanity from exploiting what God might give.

McKim credits Barth with, while not causing the reformed churches to move away from infant baptism, his teaching did promote a greater theological reflection on the nature and practice of baptism. McKim concludes,

Together, infant and adult baptism convey a fuller meaning for baptism than either exclusively, alone. The obedient response of faith is highlighted in adult baptism – persons confessing their allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour while receiving forgiveness of sins and new life. In infant baptism, God's loving sovereign initiative in extending the covenant of grace to believers and their children is demonstrated.²⁴³

'From the early twentieth century onwards, two movements have had an increasing impact on the understanding and practice of Christian worship in Scotland – the ecumenical movement and the liturgical movement.'²⁴⁴ Torrance's task as he engages in ecumenical work, in liturgical renewal and his defence of infant baptism will be to further these causes while keeping faith with Barth's broader theology.

²⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 365-366.

²⁴² Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology*, p. 74.

²⁴³ Donald K. McKim, *Introducing the Reformed Faith* (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press, 2001), pp. 138-139.

²⁴⁴ Forrester, 'In Spirit and in Truth', p. 18.

Chapter Two: Torrance's Doctrine of Baptism

In Chapter One we considered the background influences on Torrance's doctrine of baptism. The general influences on Torrance were the debates surrounding three categories of baptism, baptismal regeneration, symbolism and instrumentalism.

It was also evident that Torrance was a theologian at the time that the ecumenical and liturgical renewal movements were taking place. These two movements brought the subject of baptism to the fore. The ecumenical developments provided a wider audience for both Barth and Torrance which potentially made their disagreement on baptism a more public affair. Because of Torrance's interest in ecumenism he was drawn into the subject of baptism. Torrance did not share all the goals of the liturgical renewal movement but along with the Church Service Society he was keen to have a more ordered church service in the Church of Scotland.²⁴⁵ He also took the opportunity of liturgical revision to ensure that the liturgy reflected his soteriology.

Barth and Barth's theology of baptism were outlined in chapter one and in this chapter we will demonstrate a number of the themes in Torrance's doctrine of baptism that were evident in Barth.

Barth's theology is described by Torrance as a 'Copernican' revolution. Attention is given to how that 'Copernican' revolution influences Torrance's doctrine of baptism. There are four themes in Barth's early doctrine of baptism that will be evident in Torrance as this chapter unfolds:

1. An objective baptism based on the incarnation;
2. A passive recipient;
3. The absence of a covenantal basis for baptism, and
4. An evident tension between the objective and subjective nature of salvation.

Having set the scene for Torrance's doctrine of baptism in Chapter One the task for this chapter is to describe that doctrine of baptism. In chapter five Torrance's doctrine of baptism will be compared with the doctrine of baptism largely associated with *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. If the Westminster tradition is to learn from Torrance, then it will have to understand how Torrance's theology differs from its own. How the 'Copernican' revolution, seen by Torrance in Barth, changes baptism is of primary concern here. However arriving at just how Torrance is different is not such a simple task because of the lengths that Torrance goes to, in

²⁴⁵ 'Record,' *The Church Service Society*.

trying to demonstrate how he is rooted in the early church fathers and in Calvin. Torrance does pick up threads and themes from the fathers and Calvin but he develops these ideas reflecting the ‘Copernican’ revolution that he saw in Barth. Since Torrance’s particular theological innovation is often disguised it will be necessary in this chapter to identify where he is different. This will only be partially achieved in this chapter through raising questions about Torrance’s doctrine of baptism. Chapters Four and Five will explore this issue further as they concentrate on an assessment and criticism of Torrance’s doctrine in order to bring out its distinctive nature.

It is not the intention to offer any extended criticism of Torrance’s doctrine of baptism here, but simply to describe his doctrine and the soteriological paradigm that shapes his doctrine of baptism, and note some themes that arise from his particular paradigm. Two important themes that arise out of Torrance’s doctrine of baptism will be identified. The first theme is Torrance’s understanding of union with Christ: the incarnation and vicarious humanity of Christ, and the second theme is human participation through baptism in union and communion with Christ.

To understand Torrance’s view of baptismal union with Christ, his broader view of incarnational union with Christ will be explored and related to baptism in Chapter Four.

The contention of this chapter is that the ‘salvation’ linked by Torrance with baptism is paradigmatically²⁴⁶ different to the ‘salvation’ linked with baptism in the Westminster tradition. The cause of the great neglect of Torrance’s work on baptism arises from the confusion of trying to ask traditional questions of Torrance’s theology normally associated with the debate on baptism, and finding that the questions are neither relevant nor appropriate.

Torrance’s soteriological paradigm differs in three vital ways to the traditional reformed understanding of soteriology:

1. The human condition that Christ came to solve is an ontological deficiency;
2. As a result of a different understanding of the human condition therefore the nature of the atonement is different;
3. The ground on which baptism is based is different.

²⁴⁶ Trevor Hart is an advocate of this paradigm and Hart calls for a paradigm shift in the traditional Western understanding of objective and subjective aspects of salvation. Trevor A. Hart, ‘Humankind in Christ and Christ in Humankind: Salvation as Participation in Our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 42 (1989).

Torrance used this different soteriological paradigm to defend infant baptism in the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism. This was a departure from the covenantal arguments that were traditionally used to defend infant baptism. Torrance's report was not fully accepted by the General Assembly and the Church of Scotland eventually adopted a dual practice of baptism. A question that arises here is to what extent Torrance's approach to baptism contributed to the change in practice? Alternatively Torrance may have sensed the groundswell of opinion in favour of adult baptism, and since the arguments of covenant theology had been well rehearsed but were not resisting that groundswell, then perhaps it was time for a change of approach in defending infant baptism. The work of the Special Commission on Baptism is considered in Chapter Three.

What immediately follows will be a description of Torrance's doctrine of baptism. From the description of baptism it will be seen how closely Torrance links baptism with the incarnation. Molnar in *Thomas F. Torrance: The Theologian of the Trinity*²⁴⁷ considers Torrance's doctrine of incarnation and then views how that is applied to baptism and other doctrines. The reverse order is going to be followed here. The questions about Torrance's theology will be allowed to arise out of the description of his theology of baptism, and then from the perspective of baptism the key doctrine of incarnation will be explored.

Both Barth and Torrance were critical of Westminster theology. As has been shown in Chapter One, Barth disagreed with Calvin's view of baptism. Barth was initially opposed to baptismal regeneration and to a symbolical view of baptism. The Westminster view, that in baptism God confers grace, is more than symbolism yet less than baptismal regeneration. Calvin's explanation as to what exactly God does in infant baptism was confused and remains confused in the Westminster tradition. Within the Westminster tradition the understanding of baptism is both diverse and at times vague;²⁴⁸ it is even problematic trying to find a way to state the problem. Torrance serves as a useful conversational partner, because like no other theologian in the English speaking world he draws attention to the crisis in post-enlightenment theology and in this case the crisis in the understanding of the sacrament of baptism. Not that Torrance is without his own crisis. Torrance faces the dilemma of

²⁴⁷ Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*.

²⁴⁸ Baptist theologian Erickson says 'The significance of the sacrament of baptism is not quite as clear-cut to the Reformed and Presbyterian as to the sacramentalist.' Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 359.

attempting to maintain faith with his mentor Barth who concluded from his incarnational theology that infants should not be baptised. Torrance will use the same theology to reason that infants should be baptised. Torrance opposes *The Westminster Confession of Faith* yet embraces a similar view of baptism that rejects baptismal regeneration and symbolism. This chapter will introduce how Torrance seeks to maintain faith with his associations and consistency in his objections as he sets out his view of baptism.

The attraction to this topic comes from the conviction that, with those who reject baptismal regeneration or a symbolism view, there is something about the understanding of baptism within the history of this part of the church that appears to demonstrate that it does not quite know what baptism does, what the recipient receives, or what God does in baptism.²⁴⁹ When dealing with the subject of baptism the church has traditionally either asserted or denied commitment to baptismal regeneration. Those who deny baptismal regeneration fall into two camps; those who hold an instrumentalist view of baptism or those who hold a symbolic view of baptism. Those who subscribe to a symbolic view express different opinions about what exactly is symbolised. Some place the emphasis upon what God does, and others will emphasise that baptism symbolises a human faith response to God. The instrumentalist view will reason that baptism is a means used by God to confer grace.²⁵⁰ The more courageous within the instrumentalist viewpoint will use language that would appear to support baptismal regeneration but usually there is a series of sophisticated qualifications which nullifies any previously alluded to baptismal regenerative statements.²⁵¹ The Roman Catholic Church and some Protestant churches believe in baptismal regeneration where baptism is seen to introduce the recipient into the kingdom. The symbolic view does not ascribe any direct inherent value to the act of baptism but the benefit comes in various ways.

²⁴⁹ 'Just how God employs the sacraments to distribute his grace does not become clear either in Calvin or in the works of the later Reformed.' Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, 4 vols., vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 470.

²⁵⁰ 'The effectiveness of baptism is not tied to that moment of time in which it is administered. Nevertheless, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but truly set forth and conferred by the Holy Spirit in God's appointed time to all, including infants, to whom in the purpose of God that grace belongs.' Chap. 28:6 Rowland S. Ward, *The Westminster Confession and Catechisms in Modern English* (Melbourne: New Melbourne Press, 1996).

²⁵¹ This type of reasoning is evident in those who belong to the school known as Federal Vision. Peter Leithart would be an example of this view. Peter J. Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

Bannerman describes benefits that arise from a natural or moral efficacy.²⁵² They arise in a cognitive or psychological way as God uses the baptismal act to instruct or encourage. The tension arises with the view that denies both baptismal regeneration and symbolism, because the question arises, ‘what really happens in baptism?’ Does God convey or confer something, or does God give himself? If then something ‘real’ is conferred, how is the efficacy of baptism explained for the recipient who demonstrates later that they have no interest in the Christian faith? These questions need to be put to both Torrance’s and Westminster’s theology of baptism.²⁵³

When a discussion on baptism takes place the task is usually to try to resolve these points of difference. If the reader is seeking help on these matters they will find little which is of help from Torrance. Torrance’s view of baptism sits outside the traditional debate. In Torrance’s view the church found itself in this debate because it started from wrong theological premises.

Chapter Five will explore whether Torrance solves the uncertainty of the Westminster view or if from within Westminster theology this can be addressed. Many of the debates on baptism tend to centre on why an infant should or should not be baptised. This debate locates the consideration of baptism at a single point, interested only with the beginning of new life. Torrance’s emphasis falls on an objective view of baptism, a baptism common to Christ and the Church. He speaks of a ‘dimension in depth’, a phrase that he repeatedly uses to draw attention to the fact that he wants to broaden the focus of what God has done for humanity, from an exclusive concentration on the crucifixion and resurrection to embrace the whole of the incarnation from Christ’s birth to his ascension. A further dimension alluded to in this phrase is that salvation or healing takes place at the level of ontology. In Torrance’s view Christ was vicariously baptised for humanity and this is actualised in the Christian through union with Christ by the Holy Spirit. What will become clear in this chapter is how Torrance explores the meaning of baptism rather than trying to defend who is eligible to be baptised.

²⁵² James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Natures, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline and Government of the Christian Church*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p. 1.

²⁵³ Further debates involve the mode of baptism – sprinkling, pouring or immersion. There are also debates associated with who is the appropriate candidate for baptism – an adult or infant? The mode of baptism will not be dealt with here but some consideration will be given to the question about the rightful recipient of baptism.

Torrance, in his teaching on baptism, has a theological paradigm to introduce what perhaps is best understood when seen in contrast with what others have said about baptism. For example, Bromiley states that baptism,

consists in the movement of death and rising again as participation in the death and rising again of Christ. Applied to us, death and rising again mean remission of sins and regeneration, with both of which baptism is expressly connected in the New Testament.²⁵⁴

Bromiley captures the connection between baptism and the death and resurrection of Christ that many reformed writers have emphasised.²⁵⁵ Torrance would not necessarily disagree with this description of baptism except that he would insist that it is not complete. Torrance has two main points to make with regard to baptism, first, that baptism is not merely a participation in Christ's death and resurrection but a participation in Christ's birth, baptism, life, death, resurrection and ascension – the whole incarnational event – and second that the whole incarnational event is vicarious in its nature.²⁵⁶

Torrance indicates that there is a new interest in the humanity of Christ and notes that,

A parallel movement of thought has been taking place in regard to the sacraments of the Gospel which are traced back to their ultimate ground in the Incarnation and in the vicarious obedience of Jesus Christ in the human nature which he took from us and sanctified in and through his self-offering to the Father.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 77.

²⁵⁵ Murray says that, 'Baptism signifies union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.' John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1962), p. 3; Cullman links Christ's own baptism with the Cross, 'the Baptism of Jesus points forward to the end, to the climax of his life, the Cross, in which alone all Baptism will find its fulfilment.' Oscar Cullman, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1958), p. 19; Cullman goes on to bring out the vicarious nature of Christ's baptism, where he emphasises that Christ's death 'will complete the general Baptism, for all men, and once for all, at the moment of his atoning death.' *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20; 'This baptism that individuals participate in is a once off baptism accomplished by Christ and 'according to the New Testament, all men have in principle received Baptism long ago, namely on Golgotha, at Good Friday and Easter.' *Ibid.*, p. 23. The World Council of Churches, in their Faith and Order Paper of 1982, broaden the foundation of baptism to include the life of Christ, when it says that, 'Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ and with his people. ... Baptism means participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.' *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, p. 1.

²⁵⁶ 'Our birth of the Spirit reposes upon the birth of Jesus, the Firstborn of the new creation, as well as upon the death and resurrection. That is, I believe, an important element that needs to be restored to the doctrine of Baptism.' So where Cullman speaks of all humanity receiving their baptism at Easter, Torrance would say that the whole of humanity receive their baptism at Christmas. Thomas F. Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism, New College Lectures*, (University of Edinburgh), p. 1.

²⁵⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (London: G. Chapman, 1975), p. 82.

Referring to the reports of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism, 1955-62, Spinks indicates that this broader foundation of the whole person and work of Christ, 'becomes the hermeneutical key which unlocks the rest of the report.'²⁵⁸

According to Torrance the sacraments

have to be understood as having to do with the whole historical Jesus Christ from his birth to his resurrection and ascension, for their content, reality and power are constituted not simply by the saving act of God upon us in Christ but by the act of God fulfilled in the humanity of Christ.²⁵⁹

It is this broader approach, Torrance reasons, that takes in the whole incarnational event that must inform the understanding of baptism. It is this larger canvass that Torrance likes to call 'a dimension of depth'. This dimension of depth in baptism goes back 'to the saving work of God in Jesus Christ, and as grounded so objectively in that work that it has no content, reality or power apart from it.'²⁶⁰ This, for Torrance, means that to ignore this 'dimension of depth' is to think of baptism in the flat, as an event in itself.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Torrance is largely ignored on baptism is because he does not fit into the traditional debate. No-one within the traditional debate can really own Torrance as an advocate. He is as problematic to the Roman Catholic, the liberal Protestant, the Reformed and the Baptist. A vast volume of Torrance's work on baptism lies dormant in the Church of Scotland archives perhaps because the church does not know where his view fits.²⁶¹ David Wright notes the neglect of Torrance's view of baptism. Wright, himself a prolific writer on the subject of baptism, says that

The Scottish special commission laboured during 1953-63 under the convenorship of Thomas F. Torrance who wrote most of the voluminous reports. It remains probably the most comprehensive investigation of baptism, especially in its theological aspects, ever undertaken.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Bryan D. Spinks, *Reformation and Modern Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From Luther to Contemporary Practices, Liturgy, Worship, and Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 147.

²⁵⁹ Legal metaphors do not describe for Torrance the work of salvation. Salvation is not viewed as an external transaction. Medical metaphors would not suffice for Torrance as if salvation is like a surgeon working on us. Torrance wants us to think about ontology, that the being of God while remaining God becomes human being and at that level of becoming one with us, humanity's problem gets fixed or healed. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 82.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁶¹ Torrance's work as Convenor of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on baptism is considered in Chapter Three.

²⁶² David F. Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p. 44.

Wright goes on to say,

The Commission's labours, resting largely on T. F. Torrance's work, suffered from a density of expression. Its argument relied on some questionable linguistic analysis and focused on the theologically questionable notion that 'baptism' refers primarily to 'the one, all-inclusive, vicarious baptism of Christ for all men'. This basic conception, which could distinguish between 'the water rite' and 'the real baptism – Christ's', issued in a doctrine of sophisticated elusiveness which not surprisingly – since it sat loose to historical and contemporary baptismal realities – proved unequal to the demands of pastoral confusion and disorder.²⁶³

However not all agree with Wright's assessment, Hunsinger says of Torrance's work on the sacraments that it 'is surely the most creative Reformed breakthrough on the sacraments in twentieth-century theology, and arguably the most important Reformed statement since Calvin.'²⁶⁴

As the chapter unfolds, Torrance's view of baptism and how this is related to his theology will emerge, and from this it will be demonstrated why Torrance's voluminous work on baptism has been largely ignored. The chapter will also uncover how Torrance uses Barth's theology and gets it to point in a different direction to how Barth saw the outworking of his theology in baptism.

The descent of Christ into his baptism and his ascension out of baptism will be used as an analogy to describe Torrance's view of the descent of Christ into humanity and his resurrection and ascension in bringing humanity into the fellowship of the trinity. While this baptismal analogy serves as a window into Torrance's whole theology it also reveals the particular view of baptism that Torrance has put forward, based on a paradigm that markedly differs from the reformed paradigm.

While Torrance has addressed the issue of baptism in two essays, reference to baptism and the sacraments in general appear throughout his many works. Since Torrance never produced a Systematic Theology,²⁶⁵ the task at hand will be to locate, compile and critically evaluate Torrance's baptismal understanding.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 305.

²⁶⁴ Hunsinger, 'The Dimension of Depth', p. 143.

²⁶⁵ He had spoken of producing a three volume work of which *The Christian Doctrine of God* was the first volume and the remaining two were never produced. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

Torrance's work on baptism includes two published papers, an unpublished²⁶⁶ eight page lecture given at Auburn Theological Seminary in 1938/9, three New College Lectures on Baptism,²⁶⁷ the documents covering the ten year Church of Scotland Commission on Baptism, and some unpublished correspondence between Barth and Torrance on Baptism.²⁶⁸

In order to outline Torrance's view on baptism the structure used in his paper 'The One Baptism Common to Christ and the Church'²⁶⁹ will be followed here.²⁷⁰ Reference will be made to Torrance's other works on baptism where additional points are made, clarified, represent a development, or a change of view.

2.1 Torrance's Description of His Doctrine of Baptism

Torrance sets the scene for his discussions on baptism by heralding a breakthrough in modern theology and biblical studies²⁷¹ - the dawn of a new era. He attributes this new dawn²⁷² to the insights afforded to the church through the developments in theology and biblical studies. This is how Torrance sets the scene to provide a context for the new theological paradigm he will introduce. From this new context Torrance identifies three specific developments:

1. A greater appreciation of the unity of the Old and New Testaments;
2. A greater attention to the incarnation and the humanity of Christ;
3. A deeper appropriation and strengthening of the Nicene and Chalcedonian Christology.

²⁶⁶ At the behest of Alister McGrath Torrance published his Auburn lectures in 2002; however he did not include the lecture on baptism.

²⁶⁷ One of the New College lectures is a paper by James Torrance that Thomas Torrance must have used in his lectures. This refers to the unpublished and unedited New College lectures, the majority of which have been published by Robert Walker. T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert Walker (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008); T. F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert Walker (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).

²⁶⁸ The unpublished correspondence between Barth and Torrance relates to Torrance's work on baptism as part of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism. This will be discussed in Chapter Three.

²⁶⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, pp. 82-105.

²⁷⁰ Colyer rates this as Torrance's most important work on baptism. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, p. 263, fn. 110.

²⁷¹ This seems to represent a change in attitude towards the modern Bible scholars. In the 1950s he was critical of how nineteenth century and early twentieth century scholars clouded the understanding of the Old Testament. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 93.

²⁷² The church is according to Torrance in the midst of a third major revolution in its thinking. The first was in the change from a primitive to a Ptolemaic cosmology (2nd- 4th cent.) and the second in the change from a Ptolemaic to a Copernican and Newtonian cosmology (16th- 17th cent.). This amounts to a new reformation for Torrance. This helps set the scene for the introduction of Torrance's paradigm of salvation. Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 260.

2.1.1 The Old Testament Background of Proselyte Baptism

Torrance notes how the New Testament embraced ideas without controversy or question. There are many New Testament doctrines and practices that clearly form part of what might be described as new revelation yet they seem to be everywhere accepted by the early New Testament Church without the degree of controversy and discussion that has occupied the time and energy of the church since then. The practice of baptism, it seems, is just accepted, that this is what should happen.²⁷³

Torrance says that the New Testament just takes baptism for granted 'and speaks of Baptism quite naturally, without any difficulty of communication and without any need for explanation.'²⁷⁴ In order to explain this ready acceptance, Torrance sets himself the task of entering into the mindset of the New Testament writers to explore and identify what were the influences from Old Testament teachings and practices before the time of the incarnation, that made embracing the sacrament of baptism such an easy task.²⁷⁵ Torrance identifies a barrier to getting into that early mindset. Centuries of 'exhaustive Old Testament investigation'²⁷⁶ (particularly the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) clouds the understanding rather than helping towards understanding. Torrance adds, 'One thing must be clear, that we cannot expect them to have understood it after the fashion of scientific Old Testament scholarship today.'²⁷⁷ Now while Torrance stresses the continuity between the Old and the New Testaments he is careful to emphasise the radical impact that the coming of Christ had upon the way these Old Testament interpretations were now thought about -

their interpretation of the Old Testament was decisively altered by the overwhelming and shattering fact of Christ, which drew to it all

²⁷³ 'When Jesus entered on his ministry, he found the baptism of water cleansing already established and practised by his forerunner; he only continued it, limiting it to the Jews while he lived, and extending it to the Gentiles after his death.' P. Wolff, *Baptism: The Covenant and the Family* (Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1862); Leithart describes how the Gospel of Mark begins with the announcement of the imminent appearance of the King. 'An eschatological *kerygma* that begins with baptism, though, is peculiar. But to whom? Apparently not to those whom John preached ...' Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism*, p. 1.

²⁷⁴ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 91.

²⁷⁵ 'To understand properly any New Testament theme we must go back to the Old Testament. The Bible of the first Christians was the Old Testament understood in the light of the coming of the Messiah. Its teaching had influenced the minds of many generations and established the patterns of thinking which enabled the person and mission of Jesus to be understood. If we cannot divorce understanding of (the) true nature of Christ's death from the teaching of the Mosaic sacrifices, neither can we divorce understanding of Christian baptism from its Old Testament roots.' Rowland Ward, *Baptism in Scripture and History* (Melbourne: New Melbourne Press, 1991), p. 3.

²⁷⁶ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 93.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

the lines of Old Testament teaching, fulfilling them and abrogating them in a sovereign manner.²⁷⁸

The use of the Old Testament had been forever altered with the coming of Christ,

The reality in Christ is not bound by the ancient shadow or image; that was only a signitive pointer to the reality and now that the reality has arrived it interprets itself, not by an arbitrary handling of the Old Testament, but by a significant and sovereign use of it, bending it in subservience to the New.²⁷⁹

While bearing in mind that this change has taken place, Torrance believes that it is still useful to turn to these Judaistic ideas and practices to learn how they may have informed the practice of Christian baptism.

Torrance says, 'I believe that we may profitably take our cue from the Judaistic conception of proselyte baptism'.²⁸⁰ This Jewish tradition is picked up in sources that Torrance says are dated to the middle of the second century. References to proselyte baptism in the Mishnah are also present, 'Which allude to a time when the Temple was still standing.'²⁸¹ The oldest evidence for proselyte baptism according to Torrance is in the New Testament itself. The assumption that Torrance makes having stated the dates of his sources is

that it is extremely difficult to conclude that the firm practice of proselyte baptism in the second century Judaism did not go back, like everything else, to authoritative sanctions in their tradition very much earlier, and that the written teaching of the second century did not have behind it a long tradition.²⁸²

All in all it would appear from Torrance's own assessment that it is a difficult matter to hope to detect with any degree of certainty what the influences might have been on the New Testament writers. In summary the problems Torrance identifies are: that today's current way of thinking has been distorted by Old Testament scholarship; that the sources available for investigating New Testament thinking are later than the New Testament and the way the New Testament writers thought was radically reshaped with the coming of Christ.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Beasley-Murray asks the question, 'If proselyte baptism was a universally accepted institution in Judaism before the Christian era, how are we to explain the fact that there is not one clear testimony to it in pre-Christian writings and its complete absence of mention in the writings of Philo, Josephus and

With his introductory word of caution Torrance proceeds to examine proselyte baptism. Torrance identifies three²⁸⁴ main elements to the incorporation of the proselyte into the Jewish community: ‘Circumcision, the sprinkling of sin-offering water on the third and seventh days after circumcision, and immersion.’²⁸⁵ Torrance refers to this threefold aspect of initiation or ‘rite of incorporation into the Covenant-people and of taking on the yoke of Torah’²⁸⁶ as proselyte baptism.²⁸⁷ As Torrance proceeds with his explanation he seems to lose the initial caution about the tentative nature of the data and becomes more definite in his estimation of how proselyte baptism can inform the Christian practice of baptism,

incorporation into the *hibri* must be one of the oldest and most telling ideas governing the conception of Baptism which it eventually demanded. By looking behind these rites incorporating proselytes into the Covenant-people we can find considerable help in understanding the teaching of the New Testament.²⁸⁸

the Bible, particularly the New Testament?’ George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 19.

²⁸⁴ Beasley-Murray only speaks of circumcision and a bath. Ibid., p. 20. Jeremias notes that ‘the silence of Philo and Josephus have occasionally given rise to doubts whether proselyte baptism goes back so far as the days of the early Church.’ Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1958), p. 25. Jeremias adds further referring to Judith 12:2 ‘that in the second century BC circumcision was sufficient when a Gentile was converted to Judaism and nothing is said about baptism.’ Ibid.. Schurer describes a practice of proselytizing that was not at all uniform but in fact was inclined to be made less onerous in order to secure the conversion. ‘The proselytizing zeal of the Jews had just to content itself with what it could get. It was felt that much had been gained if anyone could be so far converted as to worship the only true God and without the use of images. As regards the ceremonial law, only certain leading points were insisted on in the first instance. Thus the fourth book of The Sibylline oracles, for example, which was composed about the year 80 of our era, and is in all probability of Jewish origin, contains an address to the Gentiles, in which prominence is given only to the worship of the true God and the belief in a future judgment, while instead of requiring the converted Gentile to be circumcised, all that is asked is a bath of purification.’ Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ: Index*, vol. II (New York: Scribner, 1890), p. 313.

²⁸⁵ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 96.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ This rite was undergirded by a powerful theology of participation in the Exodus redemption out of Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and of the sanctuary cleansing of the Covenant at Mt. Sinai. Torrance picks up on the Hebrew word ‘*ger*’ (proselyte) which is much in vogue today as various theologians grapple with developing a theology for ministering to refugees. Vimalasekaran Peter, *A Biblical Model for Refugee Ministry: The Refugee Ministry of European Christian Mission International in Freiburg, Germany 2000-2007* (Reformed Theological Seminary, 2008). Torrance identifies the breadth of the semantic field of the Hebrew word ‘*ger*’ which is much wider than what is normally meant by proselyte. ‘The Hebrew word ‘*ger*’ is applied in different ways in the Old Testament. Konbel describes its literal and metaphorical uses. It is used to describe the foreigner living in the land with a sense of subordination to the native dwellers. It is used of the Israelite as he lives before God. ‘In postbiblical Heb. And Aram. The vb. Gwr most often refers to converting (becoming a proselyte), though it does not lose the sense of sojourning or being a neighbour.’ Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 1 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), pp. 836-838.

²⁸⁸ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 97.

Torrance takes up the explanation of the Old Testament's introduction of circumcision, 'This rite was given to Abraham and his family as *hibri* in ratification of the Covenant and in seal of the divine promise attached to it, the promise of a country but also of a messianic future.'²⁸⁹ Torrance develops the idea that the People of God were thought of as *gerim*. When they were in Egypt they were out of the land. This was the basis for the commandment to love the *gerim* because they had been *gerim* in Egypt. This idea finds further place in the later Babylonian exile and a developing idea is of the pilgrim character of God's people awaiting the messianic kingdom.

The first element of proselyte baptism is circumcision and Torrance applies the Old Testament meaning to this because as it normally applies to the descendents of Abraham it will have a similar significance to the proselyte. 'In circumcision the Covenant was cut into the flesh of Israel as a sign and seal of its promised fulfilment.'²⁹⁰ Torrance identifies the covenant as having a promise that awaits a future fulfilment. That promise will be fulfilled by God, but he adds, 'The Covenant was such that it had to be actualised in the whole life of Israel, enacted in its flesh, done into its existence before God.'²⁹¹ Torrance does not discuss the objective/subjective aspect of circumcision here but it is useful to make this distinction that there is the objective future fulfilment by God and there is the subjective actualisation in the flesh of the male child. The objective/subjective tension is a major issue in Torrance's understanding of baptism.

Torrance notes that there is development of the concept of circumcision throughout the Old Testament, providing

a deeper interpretation in terms of the circumcision of ears, lips, and heart – the whole 'inner man' so to speak, had to be circumcised. That is to say, the Covenant will of God had to be inscribed by His finger or by His Spirit upon the tablets of the heart.²⁹²

In answer to the question that Torrance poses, 'How was this Covenant to be fulfilled in the flesh of Israel?'²⁹³ Torrance replies that the answer is given by 'the doctrine of the servant of the Lord' in Isaiah

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

as He who will fulfil and mediate the Covenant. (I am myself convinced that while the Servant represents Israel in its ordeal it has a further significance in which, without denial of the corporate character of the Servant, one Servant in the midst of Israel is indicated, and that here it is ultimately the figure of Moses, 'the servant of the Lord,' that lies behind it.) The fulfilment of God's Word and Truth, His judgment and mercy, takes place in the life of the Servant, but in him it is vicariously fulfilled for all. In the later Isaianic prophecies we hear also of the Holy Spirit. The Servant is anointed with the Spirit and through Him the Spirit is bestowed. And in this connexion we may add the prophecies of Joel fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in the Baptism of the Spirit.²⁹⁴

Torrance now pulls together the Old Testament ideas on circumcision and recasts it in New Testament language. Circumcision is fulfilled in the blood of the New Covenant and the gift of the Holy Spirit. For Torrance Christ's total circumcision²⁹⁵ meant the cross. With this twofold fulfilment of circumcision being worked out in the flesh of the servant of the Lord,

the Old Covenant no longer remains in force in the old form, and therefore the outward sign of it is abrogated or rather displaced by a sign appropriate to the fulfilled reality of the New Covenant in Christ. ... Baptism is therefore given to take the place of circumcision as the sign and seal of the New Covenant.²⁹⁶

It is important to note what Torrance has done here. He has taken the first of three elements of what he called proselyte baptism and his stated task is to show how proselyte baptism informs the New Testament writers on Christian baptism.

Torrance has noted the development of the meaning of circumcision throughout the Old Testament and the fulfilment of circumcision in Christ in the New Testament. The meaning that described Abraham's circumcision and the further unfolding of the meaning of circumcision was the same meaning that he applies to the circumcision of the proselytes.

Torrance then turns to his second noted element of proselyte baptism. Torrance finds it strange that the sprinkling of the sin offering has been neglected by Western minds, which becomes all the more strange, he adds, when it is realised that the word

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ The developing understanding of circumcision in the Old Testament extended to the idea of ears, mouth and ultimately heart. The development in the New Testament is the cross. The question arises in Torrance's emphasis upon the vicarious nature of say Christ's birth, baptism, etc. as to whether Christ's circumcision is vicarious. Brief comment is made of Christ's circumcision in the New College lecture.

²⁹⁶ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 99.

baptizein is widely used in pre-Christian Jewish literature. The meaning attached to the word is a 'solemn cleansing by sprinkling'²⁹⁷ and that in itself 'ought to be sufficient to indicate its importance in examining the background to the rite of baptism.'²⁹⁸ The sprinkling of the sin offering water²⁹⁹ was according to Torrance one of the most solemn and awful rites of the Old Testament. The Old Testament language associated with the rite suggests the thought 'to un-sin', and Torrance adds that 'The language used in the Mishnah indicates that in some sense it was thought of as a baptism of death, a death to sin.'³⁰⁰ Torrance explains that the background to the offering is the burning of the red heifer.³⁰¹ The red heifer was a sin offering involving a total burning by fire outside the camp. The ashes were preserved and 'used along with the sprinkling of water for un-sinning and sanctification on occasions of grave defilement.'³⁰² Torrance indicates that some scholars regard this rite as an

Israelite substitution for the pagan rite of 'passing through fire' children in sacrifice to Molech. That may well lie behind the incident recorded in Numbers 31 where the purification of Israel and their Midianite prisoners was to be effected through the water of separation impurity while the gold and silver, etc. captured were to be 'passed through fire'. What could not endure the fire was to be made to pass through water, that is, by means of this solemn sprinkling. Whatever the origin of the rite, cleansing by sin-offering water was a 'vicarious rite' in place of a kind of baptism by fire.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Leithart argues in his thesis that baptism fulfils and replaces the ordination rite and therefore has the same role as ordination had in Israel, namely consecrating priests for ministry in God's house. The ceremonies using water are mostly applied to oneself by oneself and not therefore informing us about Baptism other than in a more general sense of cleansing, linked with atonement. The water rite associated with ordination of the priest was the only water rite that was applied to the person by another in the Old Testament, according to Leithart, and therefore this should inform us about the meaning of baptism. Like Torrance Leithart chides the church for its lack of use of the Old Testament sacraments to inform us about the New Testament sacraments. Leithart says that there has been a latent Marcionism in the church. Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism*, p. xx.

³⁰⁰ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 99.

³⁰¹ This ceremony is related to purification from contamination arising from contact with a dead body. It is difficult to understand why Torrance refers to the sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer and the uses of the ashes in association with baptism. Sprinkling and purifying are certainly themes connected to baptism. The reference does not provide a basis for Torrance to speculate on the vicarious nature of the rite that substitutes for a baptism of fire. Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers*, ed. Nahum Sarna (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990); Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); N.H. Snaith, *Leviticus and Numbers*, New Century Bible (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1967).

³⁰² Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 100.

³⁰³ Ibid.

Torrance uses the tentative phrase ‘that this may well be’ which he turns into the assertion of this being a vicarious rite. He asserts

that the ordinance of separation and un-sinning in this awful way applied to the *gerim* as well as to the Israelite. It was this that added solemnity to the circumcision of the proselyte, and made his coming from circumcision like, ‘coming from the grave’ as the Mishnah puts it.³⁰⁴

In order to explore in greater depth this sprinkling of water³⁰⁵ Torrance describes the rites associated with the cleansing and readmission of lepers back into the community. The law of God has certain sanctions prescribed against lepers. They were separated from the community and regarded as unclean and, according to Torrance, ‘having no civil rights.’³⁰⁶ Readmission of the leper to the community involved

a ceremony of reconsecration through a sevenfold sprinkling of the water of un-sinning, remarkably parallel to that for the consecration to the priesthood, enabling them to draw near to holy things, and a ceremony remarkably parallel to that of the Day of Atonement for the annual renewal of the Covenant between God and Israel.³⁰⁷

Torrance notes that the penitential David in Psalm 51 described his state in similar ways to the condition of the leper and prayed for the cleansing that would then allow him to draw near to God. Torrance notes further how the language of this water rite is used with

messianic significance. It was used by Ezekiel in his spiritual reinterpretation of circumcision, and above all in the important passage in 36:25 where the messianic gift of a cleansing and quickening Spirit is spoken of as the sprinkling of ‘clean waters’, resulting in a new heart and a new spirit.³⁰⁸

Torrance notes that this Ezekiel passage was referred to frequently in the literature of Judaism,

but nowhere perhaps more significantly than at the end of the Yoma where it is adduced to give interpretation to the baptismal

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ward is careful to distinguish between non-repeatable and repeatable Old Testament baptisms. ‘If we investigate the Old Testament we can find two unrepeatable ‘baptisms’ in the Mosaic law – a blood baptism and a water baptism; and at least eleven subsidiary and repeatable baptisms several of which are associated with sprinkling of blood.’ Ward, *Baptism in Scripture and History*, p. 4

³⁰⁶ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 100.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

ablution of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and to interpret that baptism messianically as 'the hope of Israel'³⁰⁹

Torrance concludes that 'The association of this kind of baptism or sprinkling of the water of the Spirit with circumcision, and its messianic reinterpretation, can hardly be over-estimated so far as the origins of the New Testament rite are concerned.'³¹⁰ So from tentative cautious beginnings Torrance becomes more assertive about the information that can be obtained.

Torrance then turns his attention to what he has described as the third element of proselyte baptism – immersion. The use of immersion was widespread among various religious groups according to Torrance, the Pharisees using it as an initiation rite for the whole family into their sect. The Pharisees in fact carried out elaborate daily baptisms. Torrance states that within Judaism that these rites were linked with the laver in the tabernacle or sea in the Temple where the priests washed themselves before and after performing ceremonial duties. Torrance also notes that the sacrifice was also washed. Torrance explains that

it would appear that the placing of the Laver in the Temple was originally designed, or at least later interpreted, to represent symbolically the crossing of the Red Sea together with the sanctification of Israel for the service of God within the Covenant. ... Thus the application to proselytes of an act of immersion at the end of their initiation meant their participation in the mighty acts of Israel's redemption out of Egypt at the Exodus, their entry into the holy and priestly people of the Covenant, and their readiness through sanctification to receive instruction from the Law of God and to come under its yoke.³¹¹

On this point Jeremias³¹² indicates that the Torah was binding on Israel alone.³¹³

However once the proselyte has been initiated into the covenant community then it

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Torrance offers no support for the assertion that the Laver represented the Red Sea. It was the priest who washed in the laver but Torrance has connected the Proselyte's baptism, with the laver and the laver with the Exodus. These links are very tenuous but it enables Torrance to connect baptism with the Old Testament Salvation event. Ibid., p. 103.

³¹² The Old Testament regulations about Levitical purity and impurity were consequently binding on Israelites exclusively. Because they were not impure Gentiles only needed circumcision to enter the covenant community. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, p. 24.

³¹³ Torrance is not alone in asserting that the antecedents of baptism lie in the Old Testament. Wolff suggest that there are three alternatives to arriving at a theology of baptism: 1. Reject Baptism altogether, 2. Construct it on Tradition and Fancy, 3. Connect it with the Old Testament. With regard to the second alternative Wolff says, 'The attempt can be made to construct the doctrine of baptism on the very incomplete data of the New Testament, by adding materials drawn from the Fathers, and filling up with hypothesis and probabilities.' Philippe Wolff, *Baptism: The Covenant and the Family* (Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1862), p. 181. On the third alternative, (Wolff's preferred option) he

would be expected, as Torrance has stated, that they too come under the stipulations of the covenant. Torrance stresses New Testament continuity with the Old Testament. The spiritual meaning of the Old Testament rituals have been referred to by Torrance and then given a Christological interpretation.

While Torrance has not offered any substantial treatment of the literature on proselyte baptism he has indicated certain trends and developments that point to how baptism was so readily accepted by the New Testament community.

2.1.2 The New Testament Theology of Incarnation

Not only has the new era of understanding informed the Old Testament roots of baptism but according to Torrance it has brought about a clearer grasp of the significance of the New Testament theology of the incarnation and how this informs a better understanding of baptism. Torrance finds that this new development has had its impact on the understanding of the sacraments. This new emphasis on the incarnation grounds the sacraments in the incarnation and vicarious obedience of Jesus Christ. However, a substantial number of theologians still linked the sacraments more closely with the atoning death of Christ upon the cross.³¹⁴ In order to place an emphasis on the importance of the whole incarnation Torrance speaks of a 'dimension in depth' that broadens the focus of the atonement to include the whole life of Christ from the virgin birth to the ascension. The work of Christ and the person of Christ are so closely linked in Torrance's understanding that he is able to refer to Jesus Christ as the primary sacrament. For Torrance, the work of Christ takes place within the person or being of Christ.³¹⁵ Christ has so descended, taking up

says, 'The origin of baptism will be sought in an epoch anterior to John the Baptist; it will be ascertained whether the New Testament does not connect the rite with something antecedent, which explains it, and whether baptism does not borrow essentially the character of another ceremony, more ancient, to which it is first associated, and for which it is then substituted. In a word, the whole Bible, and not the New Testament alone will be taken as the legitimate field of investigation for baptism.' Ibid.

³¹⁴ Birmele describes the World Council of Churches 1982 Faith and Order Paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) as 'the most complete modern ecumenical text on baptism.' Andre Birmele, *Baptism and the Unity of the Church in Ecumenical Dialogues*, in *Baptism and Unity of the Church*, eds. Michael Root and Risto Saarinen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989). BEM, just seven years after the publication of Torrance's chapter on baptism, still places the emphasis upon the death of Christ, 'Christian baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and in his resurrection. It is incorporation into Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord ... By baptism, Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ where their sins are buried, where the 'old Adam' is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken. ... Fully identified with the death of Christ, they are buried with him and are raised here and now to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, confident that they will also ultimately be one with him in a resurrection like his.' *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.

³¹⁵ Rankin traces the development of this idea in Torrance's writings. Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance*.

humanity, and humanity has so ascended in Christ so that, for Torrance, the sacraments have to be viewed as humanity's participation in Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit. It is this stress on the grounding in the vicarious humanity of Christ that provides an objective baptism – that there is only one baptism and that is Christ's vicarious baptism. Torrance takes the reader right to the heart of his doctrine of baptism. His doctrine is Christ centred. He brings out the meaning of baptism as he finds it linked with the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement in the person and work of Christ.

For Torrance, previous debates on baptism that focused merely on the ritual itself, whether that was baptismal regeneration that draws the meaning of baptism from the act or the performance of the act, or a symbolic view of baptism that is considered an ethical act that draws its meaning from humanity's response to a work that God has already done, is really a baptism 'in the flat'. Not that the administration of baptism is without its ritual and ethical aspects in Torrance's theology. However, since the saving act of God is identical with Jesus Christ, then when the church baptises 'it is actually Christ Himself who is savingly at work, pouring out his Spirit upon us and drawing us within the power of his vicarious life, death and resurrection.'³¹⁶

2.1.3 Distinguishing *Baptismos* and *Baptisma*

In order to further distinguish between the ritual act and this objective baptism Torrance distinguishes between two New Testament Greek words; *baptismos* and *baptisma*.³¹⁷ The New Testament usage of *baptisma* is listed in Appendix One. *Baptismos*, says Torrance, refers to the ritual act but *baptisma* refers to the objective baptism. Torrance at first presents this quite speculatively saying that the church 'may well have coined' the term *baptisma* 'with the intention of expressing Christian baptism in this objective sense.'³¹⁸ However, Torrance goes on to be more definite in his assertion that this is the case for the meaning of *baptisma*.

In order to illustrate the objective and subjective aspects of baptism, that is, what is done by Christ and what is done by the church; Torrance likens baptism to the preaching (*kerygma*) of the church.³¹⁹ *Kerygma* refers to the proclamation of the Gospel by the church, but more than that it is what is proclaimed, namely Jesus Christ himself. So as there is a double reference in *kerygma*, to the act of preaching but

³¹⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 83.

³¹⁷ A critique of Torrance's use of Scripture can be found in Chapter Four.

³¹⁸ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 83.

³¹⁹ Torrance makes a similar point by referring to a double reference in the term *oikonomia*.

primarily to the content of preaching so there is a double reference in *baptisma* to the act of baptism and the primary objective baptism of Jesus Christ. Torrance refers to this as a polarity of reference. Torrance is not clear here in the use of this analogy. Previously he had identified two terms, *baptismos* and *baptisma*. The act was described by the former and the objective content by the latter, but now Torrance appears to suggest that the church's act and the objective content are embraced by the one word *baptisma*.

Torrance acknowledges the human role in baptism - the act of the church in baptism is carried out in Christ's name. Torrance carefully qualifies and nuances this human act by insisting that the emphasis does not fall on what the church does but rather in what God in Christ has done, continues to do and has yet to do through the Holy Spirit. Torrance then asserts his conclusion that when the concept of *baptisma* is grasped then

we find it (baptism) to be grounded in the whole incarnational event in which the birth of Jesus, his baptism in the Jordan, his vicarious life, as well as his death and resurrection, and the pouring out of his Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost, all have their essential place, and must be kept in focus in our understanding of it.³²⁰

Torrance laments the neglect of the fact that the New Testament has coined a new word for Christian baptism.³²¹ He says that *baptismos* is used only in the New Testament in Mark 7:4 and Heb 6:2 to describe rites of ablution. The very absence of the provision of details about the practice of baptism serves as a means to further support this view, 'This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that nowhere does the New Testament offer us a description of the rite of Baptism. It is not interested in the

³²⁰ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 84.

³²¹ 'Of the substantival forms *baptismos* occurs only once in Mark and twice in Matthew, and *baptisma* occurs 4 times each in Mark and Luke, 6 times in Acts and twice in Matthew, referring to John's baptism. Only in Romans 6:4; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12 and 1 Peter 3:21 is it used of Christian baptism. ... *Baptisma* appears for the first time in the New Testament. No instance of its occurrence in pagan and Jewish literature has yet been found. In view of the fact that its earliest employment is for the baptism of John, it could conceivably have been coined by John's disciples. More plausibly, it is a Christian innovation, and was applied by Christian writers to John's baptism in the conviction that the latter should be bracketed with Christianity rather than with Judaism. It is often affirmed that *baptismos* denotes the act of immersion and *baptisma* includes the result (e.g. A. Oepke, TDNT I 545). Of this there is no evidence. It is more likely that *baptisma* was formed on the analogy of its Hebrew equivalent *tebilah*. Apart from the general preference of Jewish Christians for Greek terms phonetically similar to Hebrew equivalents, it may well have been adopted by them to express their consciousness that Christian baptism was a new thing in the world, differing from all Jewish and pagan purificatory rites.' G.R. Beasley-Murray in Colin Brown (ed.) *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, Rev. ed. (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), pp. 144-153.

rite as such, but in the event behind the rite.’³²² By drawing attention to the word *baptisma* Torrance intends to shift the attention from the rite of baptism itself to the Christ who is at the very centre of what baptism means.

Baptisma by its very nature does not direct attention to itself as a rite (that would be as *baptismos*) or to him who administers it, but directs us at once beyond to Christ himself and to what he has done on our behalf; that is, to the objective and fulfilled reality.³²³

Not only does *baptisma* refer to the act behind the rite but that act is a once off act by Christ,

baptisma is to be understood as referring not simply to the baptising of someone in the name of Christ but to the baptism with which Jesus Christ himself was baptised for our sakes in the whole course of his redemptive life from his birth to his resurrection, the one baptism which he continues by his Spirit to apply to us in our baptism into him, thereby making himself both its material content and its active agent.³²⁴

To develop the idea of what Torrance fully means by *baptisma* it is necessary at this stage to anticipate the idea of Christ’s vicarious baptism which will be developed later. To see the meaning of baptism only in its association with the death and resurrection of Christ is for Torrance too narrow a view.

Three pictures, particularly, have to be combined stereoscopically in one if *baptisma* is to be viewed in its proper dimension of depth: the baptism of Jesus in water and the Spirit at the Jordan, his baptism in blood on the Cross, and the baptism of the Church in his Spirit at Pentecost.³²⁵

This is an important point in Torrance’s doctrine of baptism. Torrance views the whole of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, ascension and the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost as one movement describing the one baptism of Christ and the church.

So intent is Torrance in placing Christ at the centre that he coins a new term *baptismatic* to replace *baptismal*.

It might be best for us to speak precisely of *baptismatic* rather than baptismal relation to Christ. We do speak of ‘baptismal ingrafting into Christ’, of ‘baptismal dying and rising with him’ and of ‘baptismal regeneration’ and in so doing we use a sacramental mode of speaking; but the difficulty about this language, that no matter how much the emphasis is laid upon Christ himself, some

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid., p. 111.

³²⁴ Torrance establishes this by mere assertion. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, pp. 83-84.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 88.

foolish people will always take it to mean that it is the rite of baptism which ingrafts or regenerates us, or that it is actually in the experience of the rite that we die and rise again with Christ, which can only mean that they think of this ingrafting or regenerating or dying and rising as acts in addition to what has already taken place in Christ on our behalf and therefore already been fulfilled in us in Him.³²⁶

When the word of God is preached and one is baptised 'it is actually Christ Himself, really and fully present, who acts savingly in His Church, revealing Himself and baptizing with His Spirit.'³²⁷ Torrance emphasises the objective nature of this view of baptism and seeks to encourage the reader to move on beyond the subjective, 'Only when we learn to get behind the false stress upon our own subjectivity in *kerygma* and *baptisma* can we fully appreciate the teaching of the New Testament.'³²⁸

Torrance understands the baptism of Jesus to be the baptism into his vicarious work. This baptism was a consecration not just as priest but in one act a consecration of both victim and priest. Christ was baptised into 'a life of vicarious passion, in which He went forth to bear our sins and sicknesses throughout the whole course of His public life right up to the Cross.'³²⁹ Torrance places the focus upon the life of obedience to the Father's will, 'within the conditions of our estranged and alienated humanity.'³³⁰ Christ was baptised into his crucifixion so that the crucifixion may be thought of as the fulfilment of his baptism. Between his baptism in water and his baptism of blood on the cross there lies a life of obedience, this active obedience was his obedience. When Christ spoke of the baptism with which he was to be baptised, interpreters take this to be a mere metaphor for the cross and ignore its reference to baptism. Torrance points out how the thinking is at fault here, it is 'the mistake of thinking that by *baptisma* the New Testament means *baptismos*, and fail to see the dimension of objectivity in which the New Testament always uses this term.'³³¹

Torrance is convinced that the church coined the word *baptisma* in order to drive home

³²⁶ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 111.

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ The word *baptisma* appears 20 times in the New Testament (see Appendix One). Of those 20 appearances 14 times it refers to John's baptism. 6 times the word then refers to either Christ's baptism or Christian baptism. From these 6 uses of the term it would be difficult to argue in support of either an objective or subjective view of baptism. Ibid., p. 113.

the fact that Christ deliberately linked His Baptism in the Jordan with His death on the Cross, and with the whole course of His ministry in obedience and passion on our behalf; and thereby also to drive home the fact that our Baptism in the Name of Christ is a covenanted consociation with Him in all He did to fulfil righteousness from His Baptism in the Jordan to His crucifixion on the Cross.³³²

Christ's vicarious Baptism was an objective event, 'the one *baptismatic* event in Christ, that lies behind every administration of Baptism.'³³³ For Torrance there is also a subjective aspect to baptism which is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This is part of the one great act, 'the full actualisation of His redemption in the midst of His people on earth.'³³⁴ It should not be thought that there are many baptisms in the church and Christ's baptism,

There is One Baptism, and One Body, common to Christ and His Church, but each participates in it differently – Christ actively and vicariously as Redeemer, the Church passively and receptively as the redeemed Community.³³⁵

The church is included as the many in the one. The administration of baptism to individuals must find its place within this one baptism for the church.

Thus the Baptism of the individual, child or adult, is not a new Baptism, but an initiation into and a sharing in the One Baptism common to Christ and His Church, wrought out in Christ alone but bestowed upon the Church as it is yoked together with Him through the Baptism of the Spirit.³³⁶

The aspect of baptism that Torrance feels has been most neglected is in seeing baptism in its whole incarnational event.

2.1.4 Christ's Vicarious Baptism

With regard to Christ's own baptism at the river Jordan Torrance views Jesus' baptism as a vicarious baptism. Jesus humbled himself in John's baptism of repentance and identified himself with sinners. This was an act of obedience to the Father's will. The Father openly acknowledged Jesus as his Son and the Holy Spirit openly descended upon him.

Torrance draws attention to two aspects of Christ's baptism that he attributes to the early church. The first refers to the Father's declaration of his Son. Torrance states

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 115.

that the early church considered this not as Jesus' adoption as the Son of God but the public proclamation of his divine sonship. For the early church, says Torrance, this pointed back to Christ's birth from above by the Spirit and forward to his death on the cross. Torrance does not provide any early church references to substantiate this point and it is difficult to judge at times whether Torrance is quoting or interpreting the early church. Torrance adds that Jesus linked his baptism in the Jordan with his death on the cross 'and interpreted his whole life and ministry as the baptism with which he was being baptised, identifying its completion with his passion.'³³⁷ The cross is seen by Torrance as a consummation of the complete solidarity of Christ with humanity. According to Torrance the second aspect of the baptism noted by the early church was that the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ was his anointing to be the King of the messianic kingdom. This, says Torrance, endowed Christ with authority and pointed forward through Christ's passion to Christ's exaltation. In Christ's exaltation he would open the Kingdom of Heaven to all baptised in his name. Through the resurrection Christ was declared Son of God and was seated at the right hand of the Father and given power and authority. Exercising this power and authority Christ commissioned the apostles to make disciples and baptise, and when Christ ascended he endowed the church with power by baptising it with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Torrance views the descent of the Spirit upon the church as the counterpart to what happened at Christ's baptism. This descent of the Holy Spirit, says Torrance, sealed the church as the people of God who had been redeemed through the blood of Christ, consecrated to share in the communion of the trinity and sent out into the world united with Christ as his Body to engage in the service of the Gospel. By uniting Jesus' baptism and the Pentecost baptism in to this continuous act Torrance speaks of only one baptism. All that happened to Jesus in incarnation and suffering formed the content of the Jordan and Pentecost baptisms making them essentially one baptism. An important point for Torrance is that this one baptism was one baptism common to Christ and his church.

Moving then to Torrance's treatment of the New Testament data as it relates to his understanding of the baptism of John. Torrance finds John's baptism informed by Old Testament practice.³³⁸ He adds that help is available here from the material from the Dead Sea Scrolls. In two of these documents the literal idea of circumcision

³³⁷ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 85.

³³⁸ Leithart challenges the idea that self administered water rites had any link to Baptism. Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism*.

seems to fade into the background and the focus is placed upon its spiritual meaning.

The cautious Torrance reappears again in his summing up,

The attempts that have been made to draw close parallels between these ideas and practices and those of John the Baptist to prove their direct and immediate influence upon him are not convincing, but it is significant that here we have some justification for the general line of interpretation of the origins of the rite of Baptism we have been pursuing.³³⁹

Each of the Gospel writers, according to Torrance, endeavours to show the close connection between the mission of John and Jesus, particularly with regard to baptism. John baptised others, 'Under him Baptism was no longer to be ministered by the subjects of Baptism to themselves, but was administered to them as passive receivers.'³⁴⁰ In his ministry

John summoned the Jews to uproot themselves out of their nationalist existence and to become a people of God again, a pilgrim people expecting to enter into the messianic country. He stood on the banks of the historic Jordan and pointed the way through the water to the messianic Kingdom, insisting that it had already drawn near and was about to break in with eschatological swiftness and urgency.³⁴¹

John's baptism and ministry highlights two important ideas, according to Torrance, 'an uprooting and a radical judgement, but also a new era of the Spirit, and both were to be fulfilled by the Messiah.'³⁴² Jesus steps onto a stage which is laden with so much Old Testament expectation, he comes as the Servant-Son to enact the mighty acts of God, 'Thus the Baptism of Jesus is regarded as one of the mighty acts of the Gospel, one of the saving acts inaugurating the Kingdom.'³⁴³

Each of the Gospel writers 'interprets John's Baptism from the perspective of Christ's Baptism by John, and indeed of His death and resurrection and His gift of the Spirit.'³⁴⁴ As previously explained Torrance argued that a new word is coined to describe this baptism,

Baptisma was clearly coined to speak of Christian Baptism, but it was therefore applied rightly to John's Baptism; for his Baptism was not only into the name of the Coming One, the Christ, but it

³³⁹ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 104.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 106.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 108.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

was the Baptism of Jesus by John which transformed John's rite of Baptism into Christian Baptism.³⁴⁵

Torrance offers no support for the idea that John's baptism was into the name of the Coming One.³⁴⁶ However while the Old Testament and John's Baptism may inform the understanding of Christian baptism, the doctrine of baptism according to Torrance is determined, 'by the event of Christ's Baptism and by all it involved for Him on our behalf.'³⁴⁷ It would be wrong to conclude that Torrance views John's baptism as Christian baptism but rather he states, 'that the Christian rite of Baptism derives from John the Baptist, but the form of the rite is determined by the event that took place in the Baptism of Jesus.'³⁴⁸

Jesus' baptism gave Christian baptism a new 'double form; not only Baptism of water from below, but Baptism in heavenly water from above, that is, in the Spirit.'³⁴⁹ This twofold baptism finds further expression at Pentecost when the Spirit of God is poured out and the apostles call for men and women and their children to be baptised in water.

The doctrine of baptism is developed in the New Testament after the fashion of the physical rite itself. It is here that Torrance links the sacrament with his Christology. The descent into the water and ascent out of the water takes up not just the ideas of Christ's death and resurrection but should also include the incarnation and the ascension. In fact Torrance insists that the idea of incarnation and ascension is the primary idea that the Gospel of John has in mind. The baptismal language has in mind the

descent of the Son of God into our mortal humanity and to His ascension to the right hand of the Father. It is only by false abstraction that this language is applied to Baptism with reference only to the death and resurrection of Christ, and not also to His incarnation and ascension, all for us and our salvation.³⁵⁰

Torrance attributes this broader view of Christ's baptism to the early church fathers,

Certainly the early Church regarded His Baptism in the Jordan not as His adoption to be the Son of God, but as His manifestation and public consecration as God's Son pointing back to His birth from

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ It does not appear that John the Baptist baptized disciples into any particular name. Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on Baptism* (London: Seeley and Burnside, 1840), p. 14.

³⁴⁷ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 108.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

³⁵⁰ The apostle Paul in Romans 6 deals with baptism in terms of death, resurrection and new life. Ibid.

above of the Spirit, and regarded His ascent out of the Jordan and His receiving of the Spirit when the heavens were opened over Him, for our sakes, as having its fulfilled counterpart in His ascension to open the Kingdom of Heaven to all baptized into His Name and to pour out upon them the fullness of His Spirit.³⁵¹

Here Torrance insists that the work of baptism must be linked to the person of Christ.

Christ's baptism of repentance, his anointing by the Holy Spirit, his virgin birth, his receiving the divine judgement for sin, and his resurrection all could be described as Christ's baptism. Christ received this baptism not for his own sake but for the sake of humanity. In our human nature Christ was baptised so that 'For us, baptism means that we become one with him, sharing in his righteousness, and that we are sanctified in him as members of the messianic people of God, compacted together in One Body in Christ.'³⁵² While Christ and the Church share in the one baptism, Torrance notes that this sharing is in different ways. For Christ it is actively and vicariously as Redeemer, and for the Church it is passively and receptively as the redeemed community. It is in this one baptism that Torrance sees the significance and efficacy of every act of baptism carried out by the church. In every act of baptism carried out in the name of the trinity, Christ himself is present baptising with the Holy Spirit, owning the action of the church as his action, fulfilling in the baptised what he has already done for them, and permitting them to share in the fruit of his finished work. While the act of the church and the act of Christ may be distinguished, for Torrance they should not be separated. Torrance sums up the vicarious nature of baptism by stating that this act is for the one baptised their initiation into and sharing in the 'one vicarious *baptisma* of Christ.'³⁵³

The significance of seeing Christ's whole incarnation from virgin birth through to the ascension as Christ's baptism, for Torrance, is that the complete baptism, the complete incarnation is a vicarious baptism, so that in Christ's birth the baptised have new birth and are made members of the new humanity. Through Christ's obedient life and death their sins are forgiven and they are clothed with a new righteousness. Through Christ's resurrection and triumph over the powers of evil they are freed from the dominion of evil, and through Christ's ascension the Kingdom of Heaven is opened for them and they await his coming again to fulfil in them the new creation. It is through sharing in Christ's Spirit that they are made members of his Body and

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁵² Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 87.

³⁵³ Ibid.

are admitted into the communion of the trinity. It is God's work in Christ that is the objective aspect of this one baptism. The subjective aspect is a passive reception of baptism because, argues Torrance, the baptised cannot add anything to what Christ has done.

2.1.5 Baptism and the Great Commission

Torrance touches on the debate regarding the authenticity of Matthew 28:19, where some dispute the fact that this trinitarian theology could be so well developed and come from the lips of Jesus. Torrance states that the evidence for this verse is strong and that only an *a priori* commitment to some philosophical principle could lead to the rejection of the authority of this verse. For Torrance, the Gospels are replete with references to the relationship between the Father and the Son and the presence of the Holy Spirit and this is most clearly demonstrated at the baptism of Jesus, where the Father addresses the Son and there is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps it is only when we fail to give the Baptism of Jesus by John its full and proper place in Christian Baptism, and so make a false abstraction of Baptism from the whole course of Christ's ministry from the Jordan to the Resurrection, that we have difficulty in thinking of Matt. 28:19 as our Lord's own direct command.³⁵⁴

Torrance does not engage with the textual arguments relating to this part of Matthew's Gospel and settles instead for merely asserting his view about the authenticity of the verse.

2.1.6 Baptism, the Trinity and the Incarnation

Not only does the New Testament refer to baptism into the name of the triune God but it also speaks of baptism into the name of Jesus. The baptised are not baptised into the name of Jesus alone, but into the name of the trinity. 'Baptism in the threefold Name is a rite essentially appropriate to the trinitarian character of the *baptismatic* event, which includes throughout it the relation of the Son to the Father through the Spirit.'³⁵⁵ Torrance senses no conflict between baptism in the name of Jesus and baptism in the name of the trinity,

In inseparable relation with Baptism in the Name of the Father and the Spirit, Baptism in the Name of Christ has direct reference to His birth on earth as the Son of the Father, to the whole course of

³⁵⁴ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 116.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

His obedience, as well as to His death and resurrection, and it also has reference to the ascension of the Son to the Father where He stands in for us as our Surety and Advocate and where he confesses us as His brothers and presents us to the Father as His sons.³⁵⁶

It is here that Torrance wants to place the emphasis upon the whole incarnational event.

Ultimately the Sacrament of Baptism is grounded in the incarnation in which the eternal Son immersed Himself in our mortal human life and assumed us into oneness with Himself that He might heal us and through the whole course of His obedience reconcile us to the Father in an abiding union and communion with Him.³⁵⁷

Torrance says that when we speak of baptism we normally talk about the sacrament of our incorporation into Christ but Torrance recalls that this sacrament is

ultimately grounded upon the fact that in Jesus the Son of God incorporated Himself into our humanity. It is indeed only because of the union with us effected in His incarnation that we can be given to share in all that He has done in our humanity on our behalf, and so have part in His vicarious death and resurrection.³⁵⁸

Torrance notes how careful the early church was to include the whole incarnational event so that along with the emphasis on the death and resurrection they understood ‘that Baptism is the Sacrament of the Incarnation, the Sacrament of the Nativity, as it was sometimes called.’³⁵⁹ Christ’s birth is viewed by Torrance as a vicarious birth,

it is in Christ that we are born again through sharing in His birth, and it is in Him that we are converted through sharing in his obedient life, and in Him we are resurrected through sharing in His resurrection. He was not born on earth for His own sake, but for our sake. His birth for our sake was part of His reconciling and redeeming work, and Baptism is grounded primarily upon that basic event, His incorporation into our humanity, and therefore upon His obedience unto the death of the Cross in expiation of our sin and guilt, and in His resurrection out of mortality as the New Man.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 117.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

2.1.7 Torrance's New College Lectures on Baptism

Torrance's New College lectures³⁶¹ contain three lectures on baptism. One is a paper by James Torrance and another is a copy of the paper published in *Theology in Reconciliation*. The third lecture contains Torrance's most detailed discussion of the biblical data looking particularly at John's Gospel and the teaching of Paul. Torrance distinguishes between the presentations of baptism in the Synoptic and the Johannine Gospels. According to Torrance the Synoptics give a Christian interpretation after the resurrection but John gives a Christian interpretation from the start. Torrance says that what interests the Johannine writer, 'is not baptism as such, as a ritual act, but what lies behind it in the incarnational event.'³⁶² Torrance draws attention to the fact that John links his account of John's baptism with his account of creation. The themes are, Word, life and light and echo how the Exodus was understood in terms of the creation, 'For it was the new birth of Israel God's first-born son.'³⁶³ This pointed forward to the new Exodus, something 'radically and utterly new, for it would inaugurate a new age in which everything would be changed. That is what the baptism of John ushers in, for he stands upon the threshold of the new age.'³⁶⁴ The Spirit hovering over the Genesis waters, the *Shekinah* over the Exodus waters, all play towards an understanding of the baptism of Christ and the descent of the Spirit upon Him in the waters of baptism and the Word of God from Heaven.

Torrance understands John 1:12-13 as a reference to the fact that we are born again in Christ's miraculous birth. 'All the patristic citations of this verse in the second and early part of the third centuries (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, etc.) cite it in the singular with direct reference to the virgin birth of Christ.'³⁶⁵ Torrance is suggesting

³⁶¹ These lectures were not published in the two volumes of Torrance's New College lectures. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*; Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert Walker. Copies of the unpublished lectures were provided by Rev Dr Duncan Rankin who carried out research at Edinburgh into Torrance's view of Union with Christ. See Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance*.

³⁶² Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 4.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*; In the New College lectures Torrance acknowledges that the plural reading is supported by all the main manuscripts but is 'strongly opposed by the patristic evidence of the second century (notably from Irenaeus, Tertullian but also Justin and Epistola Apostolorum): In spite of the great weight of the MSS evidence, the patristic authorities may well constrain us to take the singular particularly in view of Tertullian's statement that the received text had been corrupted by the Valentinians (in their version) from the singular to the plural. That means that we would have an explicit reference to the Virgin birth of Jesus as the ground of Christian faith and sonship, for it is out of the fullness of Christ that we have all received. His Virgin birth would then be regarded also as the reality behind our birth from above of water and of the Spirit. Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 7.

here that the evidence is stacked in favour of a singular reading, yet Brown says, ‘The textual evidence for reading a plural is overwhelming, with not a single Greek ms supporting the singular. ... the text is applied to Jesus by a number of Fathers (Justin?, Irenaeus, Tertullian) and by some early writings.’³⁶⁶ A similar point, according to Torrance has to be understood in connection with the conversation with Nicodemus, ‘that our birth of water and of the Spirit is not a carnal but a spiritual event, from above, and behind it lies the primary reality of Christ’s birth.’³⁶⁷ The Christian’s spiritual birth is not a separate event, but rather a sharing in the one Christ event. Torrance seems to be aware that he is placing a major emphasis upon the incarnation so adds a caution that we should not neglect the fact that baptism is a sacrament of Christ’s death and resurrection. However Torrance clearly feels that this aspect has been so emphasised to the neglect of the miraculous birth of Christ and that baptism should be thought of

as a Sacrament of our regeneration in Him through sharing in His new Humanity. What binds these two aspects together is the simple but often neglected fact that our incorporation into Christ is grounded entirely and primarily upon His incorporation into us.³⁶⁸

Torrance then turns his attention to John’s epistles and says that there are no specific references to baptism in John’s first epistle but that the anointing (chrisma)³⁶⁹ is important to consider. This anointing according to Torrance ‘can only refer to baptism as participation in the baptism of Christ in which he was anointed by the Spirit.’³⁷⁰ There is also the idea that this baptism is associated with enlightenment.³⁷¹ Torrance suggests that there may well be an implied reference to baptism in the third chapter.³⁷² He says that there seems to be a play on the word translated ‘hope’,

which in Hebrew (*mikweh*) means both ‘hope’ and ‘baptism’, and is taken not infrequently in contemporary Rabbinic literature to refer the hope of Israel to the coming Messianic baptism in accordance with Ezekiel 36:25: ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon

³⁶⁶ Raymond Edward Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 11.

³⁶⁷ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 118.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁶⁹ **1 John 2:20** - But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. All Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*, International Bible Society, 1984.

³⁷⁰ Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 13.

³⁷¹ ‘For He (Christ) was anointed by the Father to pour forth a manifold abundance from His own fullness on us. From this it follows that men are not really wise in the sharpness of their own minds but only in the enlightenment of the Spirit; and further that we are only made partakers of the Spirit through Christ, who is the true sanctuary and our only High Priest.’ John Calvin and T. H. L. Parker, *Gospel According to St. John*, New ed. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), p. 259.

³⁷² 1 John 3: 3 - Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

you, and ye shall be clean'. O Lord the hope (*mikweh*) of Israel; as *mikweh* cleanses the unclean so does the Holy One, blessed be He, cleanse Israel.³⁷³

Torrance detects another possible reference to baptism in 1 John 5:6f.³⁷⁴ This according to Torrance refers not just to the crucifixion but back to baptism in chapters 1 and 3 in John's Gospel. Baptism then is to be understood in terms of Christ's baptism in water and of blood - the baptism and the cross. For Torrance the emphasis throughout John's writing on baptism is not new birth as the person's experience, but as the once and for all event in the incarnation.

With reference to the Apostle Paul in relation to the apostle John, Torrance quotes Cranfield as saying 'there is a parallelism between the Pauline idea of adoption and Johannine of being born from above, both as far as the actual event and the succeeding state are concerned.'³⁷⁵ However there is, according to Torrance, a difference that needs to be noted, 'particularly in the way in which conceptions of birth and resurrection are intertwined in the thought of St. Paul.'³⁷⁶ Torrance begins with Paul's discussion of sonship in Galatians.³⁷⁷ The fundamental and primary fact upon which all else depends is the incarnational event. 'The incarnation of His Sonship into our humanity means that He assumes us into co-sonship with Himself.'³⁷⁸ Torrance compares this with Ephesians 1-2. In the Ephesian passage baptism and adoption in Christ are thought of on the ground of the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ, but in the Galatian passage the emphasis is on the actual birth of Christ, and baptism is related to that birth as much as it is to the death and resurrection of Christ. Torrance notes a number of general facts about Paul's teaching: Paul does not say that Jesus had an ordinary human birth. 'He

³⁷³ Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 13.

³⁷⁴ 1 John 5:6 This is the one who came by water and blood— Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

³⁷⁵ Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 15.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ **Gal 3:26** You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, **27** for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Gal 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, **5** to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. **6** Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." **7** So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

³⁷⁸ Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 15.

avoids the use of the word *gennen* when speaking of Jesus.³⁷⁹ When speaking of 'Jesus' birth of a woman he uses another word *genesthai*.³⁸⁰ This is the word used in the LXX to speak of the creation of Adam (a type of Christ who was to come). The *Exapesteilen* (sent forth) of Christ has a parallel with the *exapesteilen* of the Spirit. Torrance asks, 'Is not St. Paul assuming here a knowledge of the Virgin Birth?' The objective reality is the birth of Christ, but that birth is actualised in our case through faith and through baptism. Through baptism as a birth after the Spirit, the birth and Sonship of Christ are actualised in us. This is expanded upon in Galatians 4.³⁸¹ In their baptism when they had put on Christ they had participated in the birth and Sonship of Christ, now that needs to be renewed. The use of 'again' indicates that Paul thinks of baptism as a reproducing of the birth of Christ within us. It is because He incorporated Himself into our humanity at His birth, that He has made it possible for us to share in His humanity, and so be joint heirs with Him as sons of the heavenly Father. With reference to Paul saying 'Made under the law to redeem us from the law' – the incarnational event is a mighty act of God's deliverance and redemption out of bondage into freedom. But Paul's stress is not upon the act of redemption as such. Even when the act of salvation is thought of above in terms of the death and resurrection of Christ, it is upon redemption or salvation completely fulfilled in the humanity of Jesus Christ: The New Man, that Paul has in mind. The new humanity in Christ is the actual content of our redemption. Thus baptism is not to be understood simply in terms of participation through the death and resurrection of Christ, but such participation through the death and resurrection that we are one with Him. Thus the new man with which we are clothed in baptism is the new humanity of Christ Jesus.

Torrance then takes up the idea of 'The seed of Abraham'. Christ is the seed of Abraham and through him the blessing of the Spirit comes to all nations. This presents Christ as 'the Adam of the humanity.'³⁸² Christ is 'the Only One in whom the Messianic promise given to Abraham in the covenant of circumcision and in the birth of Isaac is completely fulfilled.'³⁸³ Christ is the true Israel after the Spirit. Torrance lists a number of traditions that appear to merge in Paul's thought. As seed

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ **Gal 4:19** My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you ...

³⁸² Torrance, *A Neglected Aspect of the Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 19.

³⁸³ Ibid.

of Abraham Christ is Man of the Covenant who walks before God and is perfect. He is circumcised Man – Man in whom the covenant made with Abraham has been sealed in his flesh – enacted and fulfilled. Torrance does not see circumcision as a legal ordinance or as a carnal institution. It goes back to Abraham not Moses. ‘Circumcision was the sign and seal of the Heilsgeschichte in which the promise of salvation to all nations was on its way toward fulfilment.’³⁸⁴ The fact that Israel is circumcised and the fact that Israel has committed to it the Oracles of God belong together as the two outstanding marks of the Jew. As the sealing of the Word of God in the flesh, circumcision is the sign that the Word of God must be wholly done into the flesh, must be enacted into the very existence and obedience of Israel. As circumcision involved the putting off of the flesh in the sense of the old man or the body of this death in order that there may be put on the new man. This has taken place in Christ. It is Christian baptism that takes the place of the rite of circumcision. ‘What took place in Christ’s circumcision on the Cross and in His resurrection from the dead is the perfected and abiding reality, the great inheritance into which we now enter by baptism into the name of Christ.’³⁸⁵ Paul can apply the language of circumcision to baptism and speak of it eschatologically in terms of a future redemption. What binds the past and the future together is the fact that in baptism we are sealed with the Spirit of Promise. Jesus is not only the Seed of Abraham; He is the Messianic Adam, the Head of the new humanity, the First-Born of all creation.

Torrance states that Christ as the new Adam occupies an important place in Paul’s teaching. Christ is not a son of Adam in the sense that all others are. They sinned in Adam, Christ did not sin, they all died in Adam but Christ did not die in the same sense. ‘The comparison between Christ and Adam involves such great unlikeness that Paul avoids speaking of Christ as the “Second Adam”: He is “the Second Man from heaven” and “the Last Adam”’.³⁸⁶ However Torrance identifies how they are seen as both alike in Paul in a twofold way – both came into being as the result of a creative act at the hand of God, both stand at the head of a race. ‘The Second Man, however has invaded the domain of the “first Adam”, bringing it to judgement, and as the “Last (*Eschatos*) Adam” heads it in a new relation to God which is spoken of as the “new creation”’.³⁸⁷ The first man Adam was made a living soul, of the earth,

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 27

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

earthly, the last Adam a quickening Spirit, of heaven. Torrance concludes that 'It would be difficult to find language more consonant with the tradition of the Virgin birth of Christ than this.'³⁸⁸ In Paul the birth of Jesus and his resurrection are 'thought into each other'³⁸⁹ and it is in terms of his birth and resurrection that he is firstborn of all creation and firstborn from the dead. This is not just achieved at his resurrection,

for it is in His manhood which has already involved us all in Him as Second Man and Last Adam that He is raised from the dead. ... That is the reality of Christian baptism: the fact that in Christ as the Second Man from Heaven in His descent into our humanity and His ascent wearing our new humanity, we are already involved.³⁹⁰

Torrance says that

If St. John can speak of a new birth of the Spirit from above, and think of it as deriving from the birth of Christ Himself the Only begotten Son of God, Paul can speak of a new creation, and think of it as deriving from the birth-and-resurrection of Christ the First-born of all creation, the First-born of the dead. Whereas John thinks that out theologically in terms of the Word made flesh, Paul thinks it out in terms of Christ as the New Man, the Last Adam. In neither is baptism concerned simply with the death and resurrection of Christ, but with the whole incarnational event, and so in both the baptismal language of descent and ascent is applied to the descent of Christ into our humanity from heaven, and His ascent in our humanity into heaven.³⁹¹

Here Torrance speaks of Christ's circumcision, 'His circumcision on the eighth day which is the sign of the bond between His birth and His crucifixion.'³⁹² Torrance acknowledges that on the subject of baptism that it would appear that Paul places the emphasis upon the connection with the death and resurrection of Christ, but he feels he has demonstrated that Paul does not exclude the connection with the 'birth of a new humanity and out of the old Adam.'³⁹³ Torrance states that John clearly places most of his stress upon the birth of Christ but does not exclude the death and resurrection of Christ. Torrance states that 'it is important that a Biblical doctrine of

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 30.

³⁹² Ibid., p. 31.

³⁹³ Ibid.

baptism be based upon both emphases and not one-sidedly upon the sixth chapter of Romans.³⁹⁴

2.1.8 Baptism, Judgement, Eschatology and Covenant

Torrance raises three aspects of baptism in *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*³⁹⁵ that he does not mention in *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West*.³⁹⁶ These are the topics of judgement, eschatology and covenant.

In the focus on judgement in relation to baptism Torrance draws attention to the idea that the work of healing humanity takes place throughout the whole period of incarnation. Since Christ incorporated himself into humanity that was estranged from God and under the judgement of God, that

through that incorporation (Christ) fulfilled that judgment both in His holy life in condemning sin in our flesh and by submitting and offering our humanity in Himself to the final judgment of God, that Baptism also has an aspect as baptism into judgment and into repentance, into the sphere where the Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment.³⁹⁷

Torrance also describes baptism as having an eschatological fulfilment in Christ. The atoning work of Christ reached forward from His very birth to His cross,

so our sacramental participation in the whole baptismal event involves a sharing in the Birth of Christ and in His death and resurrection as it reaches out also to final Parousia when our life now hid with Christ in God will be fully unveiled.³⁹⁸

Because the believer is in union with Christ all of these events are vicariously achieved. It is the assurance arising not from individual performance or personal obedience but from the obedience of Christ. The certainty of the eschatological hope is the certainty that Christ achieves this for believers in their humanity. Torrance does not develop his thought here but since Torrance believed that 'the New Testament regards Baptism and Eucharist as two aspects of the same event, and that it is Baptism rather than the Eucharist which is all-inclusive.'³⁹⁹ It is therefore possible to refer to some of Torrance's more developed sacramental ideas on the eucharist and

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*.

³⁹⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*.

³⁹⁷ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, pp. 119-120.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

apply them to baptism. Torrance specifically addressed the idea of eschatology and the eucharist.⁴⁰⁰ Torrance uses the language of covenant to refer to the corporate aspect of baptism. He also refers to Christ providing the covenant response of obedience to God.

Torrance clearly links his view of baptism with his incarnational theology. The difference in Torrance's view is not that he links baptism with his theology but rather his theology is different. In Chapter One it was shown that baptism has been linked with soteriology. Torrance links his doctrine of baptism with his view of soteriology and in Torrance's case that soteriology is embedded in his view of Christology.

This concludes what Torrance describes as the biblical perspective on baptism. This provides a complete overview of Torrance's view of baptism. Torrance then proceeds with an extended elaboration on certain aspects of his doctrine of baptism.

2.2 Torrance's Defence of His Doctrine of Baptism

Having described his doctrine of baptism Torrance begins a second section in his *The One Baptism Common to Christ and the Church*⁴⁰¹ to address some of the problems in the history of the church that have given rise to a wrong understanding of baptism. Torrance reiterates his 'dimension of depth' understanding of baptism. He then touches briefly on how humanity participates in the benefits of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, given by Christ, the benefits of Christ take effect in the baptised. This 'taking effect' is not a different work or a subsequent event. Adoption, sanctification and regeneration have already taken place in Christ. Participation in these benefits is by realisation or actualisation, according to Torrance. This concept of actualisation will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four. Adoption of the baptised person takes place through Christ's incarnational assumption of humanity into himself. Baptism for Torrance can only be understood as it is seen in 'the dimension of depth' reaching back *into* Jesus Christ himself. When baptism is not viewed in its 'dimension of depth', argues Torrance, then it begins to have its problems.

2.2.1 Problems with the Doctrine of Baptism in the Early Church

One of the early church problems identified by Torrance is the one of rebaptism. Torrance is referring here to the practice of rebaptising in order to deal with post-baptismal sins. He views this problem arising because of the departure of the church

⁴⁰⁰ It is not possible within the scope of this thesis to explore this.

⁴⁰¹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*.

from 'the dimension of depth' that he has outlined. The issue of post-baptismal sins could be dealt with in two ways, reasons Torrance. The church could accept that forgiveness was not possible for these sins or rebaptise the candidate. The church however did not adopt either extreme but needed what has been called a 'second plank after shipwreck'. In the West baptism was viewed as not repeatable but viewed as a sacrament dealing only with original and past sin,

and by developing a repeatable sacrament of confirmation by the laying on of hands to confer the Spirit upon recanting heretics – both of which could be given some measure of justification only when they were structured together with baptism and the eucharist in a series of gradations of sacraments.⁴⁰²

Baptism became restricted to the starting of a process.⁴⁰³

The problems in the early church were not just with baptism. According to Torrance, the whole culture had been influenced by a radical dualism. This dualism was a paradigm that shaped the thinking across the whole of theology. This gave rise to the error of Gnosticism and although Gnosticism was defeated, it, says Torrance, left its mark on the church. In particular there arose a sacramental dualism and an elevation of the baptismal ritual.

Torrance says that it was Irenaeus⁴⁰⁴ who discerned how the basic problem had arisen. Torrance clearly rates Irenaeus highly, 'No finer teaching on baptism is to be found in the whole early Church than from Irenaeus.'⁴⁰⁵ Torrance commends Irenaeus' understanding for he could see both aspects of redemption, God's act and humanity's response in Christ. On this basis baptism can be thought of as the sacrament of the incarnational reversal of the estate lost in Adam and of humanity's participation in the new humanity of Jesus Christ. Torrance adds that

The distinctive contribution of Irenaeus lies in his stress on the relation of Christian baptism to the miraculous birth of Christ as well as to his death and resurrection, for our birth of the Spirit is derived from Jesus' own birth and is dependent on it, and of course

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 90.

⁴⁰³ Torrance says that the one document that offers a significant and illuminating attempt to come to grips with the basic problem is the anonymous *De Rebaptismate* (3rd century) emanating from Rome. This document was attributed to Cyprian at one time and has been translated into English and can be found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. A. Roberts & J. Donaldson, 10 vols., vol. 5 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1995).

⁴⁰⁴ For English translation see <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/irenaeus.html> Accessed 1 November 2011.

⁴⁰⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 94.

it is in infant baptism above all that that relation becomes most apparent.⁴⁰⁶

In spite of the efforts of Irenaeus, Athanasius and the Nicene Theology, says Torrance, dualism infiltrated Augustine's thinking and through Augustine shaped all of Western theology. Even after the reformation dualism maintained its strong grip and influenced both Protestant and Roman Catholic thinking. The stranglehold of dualism, argues Torrance, has meant that the Augustinian notion of the sacrament as an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace has remained down to the present time. Torrance believes that once a surrender is made to the dualism that separates the heavenly and the earthly, the eternal and the temporal, the spiritual and the physical, then the rite of baptism becomes detached as *baptismos* from the objective reality of *baptisma* in the incarnation, water baptism and Spirit-baptism fall apart, and the immediate centre of significance tends to be transferred to the performance of the rite.⁴⁰⁷ Torrance cites Tertullian as a prime example of one who has embraced this error. However, while Tertullian insists on the unity of water and Spirit Baptism, this is only because he believes that the Holy Spirit adds spiritual substance to the waters, adds Torrance.

Torrance describes how for Tertullian the efficacy of baptism engrafted into the baptised a new nature delivering them from inherent evil received through natural propagation and thus freeing them from guilt and the liability of punishment.⁴⁰⁸ Torrance describes this as a 'naturalised notion of baptismal regeneration.'⁴⁰⁹ Along with this Tertullian also emphasised prior repentance and satisfaction for sins. Taking these two together Torrance believes that Tertullian's view provides a fatal twist that views the sacrament as anthropological rather than Christological. Even when Tertullian spoke of the objective realities of faith in Christ, it is the subjective aspect of faith that occupies his interest. Tertullian advocated postponing baptism so that the recipient could attain the faith necessary for salvation. Torrance sees that it was this anthropocentric tendency that opened the way for the rise of Donatism.⁴¹⁰

Turning his attention to Augustine, Torrance says that Augustine also insisted on the unity of water and Spirit baptism. Torrance, while remaining critical of Augustine offers some praise for him, because Augustine like Irenaeus was able to

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 94-95.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid. p. 97.

defend infant baptism by linking it to the virgin birth of Jesus. Torrance reasons that if the miracle of the virgin birth is seen to indicate the way in which the saving grace of God engages with mortal humanity, in bringing a new humanity out of the old, it is in this way that baptismal initiation into Christ, as being born together with him that leads to sharing in his death and resurrection. It is in infant baptism that this is made especially clear. This is because the objective nature of what God does can be much more easily demonstrated in the infant because of the inability of the infant to reciprocate with any subjective response. While Torrance praises Augustine for this view he regrets that the problem of dualism persisted with Augustine – the dualism between the intelligible and the sensible worlds, and his conception of divine grace as the means by which a bridge is established between the two worlds.

The outcome of this thinking, says Torrance, was the focus on the inward spiritual processes in human life and history. This was a shift from the objective to the subjective. Under this scheme baptism dealt with past original and actual sins and the soul was restored to purity. Grace was also seen to be given, enabling the baptised to fulfil the law of God. While salvation appeared to be cooperation between God and humanity, Torrance believes that Augustine was rescued from this kind of synergism by his doctrine of predestination that grounded salvation in God alone. However, Augustine's subjective emphasis did lead in a direction that placed the emphasis on inward spiritual graces and the external act of baptism that was seen as an efficacious means of grace.

For Torrance the fundamental problem arising from Augustine involves a separation of grace from Christ. When grace is separated from Christ it is a supernatural commodity connecting the intelligible and sensible worlds.

The solution to this, Torrance suggests, is to begin by rejecting the idea of an intermediate realm of supernatural grace between God and humanity. Having rejected this then, reasons Torrance, there are then only two alternative views open. The first option is to embrace a sacramental dualism between water-baptism and Spirit-baptism. Here the meaning of baptism is seen as humanity's ethical response to what God has done. The second option is to argue for a stronger unity between water-baptism and Spirit-baptism drawing its meaning from Christ's vicarious baptism. Up until this point Torrance has kept faith with his mentor Barth, but it is at this point where Torrance will accuse Barth of slipping back into the dualism that he once rejected.

Torrance considers that both he and Barth have been able to reject this Augustinian tendency that gave rise to both baptismal regeneration and through an Aristotelian correction to an instrumental view of baptism. The option left is therefore either the Zwinglian view of baptism or Torrance's view of the objective vicarious baptism of Christ. Barth chose the Zwinglian approach. For Torrance, this was an inconsistent choice by Barth. Torrance's contention with Barth's choice is because of the dynamic doctrine of the trinity and the emphasis upon the incarnation that they both share.

2.2.2 Trinitarian Baptism Provides the Solution

For Torrance, the doctrine of baptism has to be worked out by referring to the economic activity of the trinity. Torrance argues that if the doctrine of baptism in the name of the trinity is given its full dogmatic content then the trinity must be viewed as a dynamic tri-unity. For Torrance, the God who acts is the God who interacts with the creation in such a way that he creates genuine reciprocity between Himself and his human creation within the space-time structures in which he has placed them. God, while always transcendent, condescends to open his inner life and being to communion with humanity. In this encounter, the grace of God is 'the out-going of God himself towards the creature, and the personal self-giving of God to man which takes place only by way of Incarnation.'⁴¹¹ It is through this self-communicating of God to humanity that humanity is given access to and knowledge of God. This is God in his inner life and being as trinity. This reciprocity is in word and act and is fulfilled both in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Christ through the *hypostatic union* communicates the self-giving of God with humanity. In Christ God becomes human and humanity is brought into a binding relation with the trinity. Through the Holy Spirit the self-giving of God actualises itself in humanity. The Holy Spirit creates humanity's capacity to receive and lifts humanity's capacity to receive, and lifts humanity up 'to participate in the union and communion of the incarnate Son with the heavenly Father.'⁴¹²

In this self-communication, for Torrance, God remains sovereign. God is always transcendent yet is present personally. This is not merely a created relation brought about by divine causality, 'yet it does take place as real happening within our earthly

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p. 100.

⁴¹² Ibid.

and historical existence without being tied down or confined to the creaturely level as such.⁴¹³

With regard to human response, Torrance views Christ's response to the Father as a vicarious response. Through the Holy Spirit God unites humanity with Christ

in such a way that his human agency in vicarious response to the Father overlaps with our response, gathers it up in its embrace, sanctifying, affirming and upholding it in himself so that it is established in spite of all our frailty as our free and faithful response to the Father in him.⁴¹⁴

Torrance describes faith as the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism for Torrance then is not a sacrament of what the person does but rather of what God has done on the person's behalf in Jesus Christ. However Torrance sees baptism not just as a past act but of what God is now doing by his Spirit, 'uniting us with Christ in his faithfulness and obedience to the Father and making that the ground of our faith.'⁴¹⁵

2.3 Important Features In Torrance's Doctrine of Baptism

In his doctrine of baptism Torrance places the emphasis upon the meaning of baptism. That meaning for Torrance is Christ centred. Torrance's account of baptism reads so differently to many other works on baptism because of its close link with Christology. This is an important step because the temptation when dealing with the subject of baptism is merely to engage with the typical discussions. This focus on the Christology and soteriology behind baptism represents a refreshing interest in something other than the vexed question about who the proper recipient of baptism is – adult or infant.

A further notable point in Torrance's doctrine of baptism is his indebtedness to Barth. It is in his indebtedness to Barth that Torrance introduces what can only be described as a paradigmatic change in the discussion of baptism. The soteriology that Torrance links with baptism is different to the soteriology that Westminster theologians and many other Protestant theologians will link with baptism. It was not out of a desire to be different that motivated Torrance but rather because of the conviction that something was altogether wrong with a theology that would neglect, the trinity, union with Christ, the incarnation and the meaning of baptism. A tradition that produced legalism and concentrated on the subjective in Torrance's eyes had

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 101.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 103.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

something wrong with its presuppositions. Westminster theologians have a case to answer because the areas of neglect identified by Torrance are substantial doctrines.

Torrance saw his theology as a theology of love and grace. He was concerned that much theology had been reduced to subjectivism with the focus on the reception of the benefits of Christ and the human response leading to inevitable legalism.

Torrance places the emphasis on grace rather than law; he speaks of what God does rather than what humanity does. The source of God's kindness to humanity, for Torrance, is the love of God. Torrance believes that Westminster theology has been cast in a transactional account of the atonement and that the love of God towards humanity is bought at a price.

Torrance's Christ centred baptism shifts the emphasis from the subjective to the objective. Key to understanding Torrance's doctrine of baptism are two main points: the one baptism common to Christ and the church and baptism in its dimension in depth grounded in the whole incarnational event.

The concept of one baptism has a twofold aspect to it in Torrance's estimation. Torrance combined Jesus' baptism at the Jordan River, his life and suffering and the baptism with the Spirit at Pentecost into one continuous act that was essentially one baptism. That one baptism was a vicarious baptism, hence when the church carries out a baptism it is not a new or another baptism but rather the actualisation for the recipient of the one vicarious baptism of Christ.

Torrance's 'dimension in depth' is his way of placing the emphasis on the whole incarnational event and its relationship to baptism, and also identifies the nature of the atoning aspect of the incarnation in that, for Torrance, the work of Christ is identical to the person of Christ.

This approach to baptism draws on important doctrines: the incarnation; *the homoousion*; *the hypostatic union*; union with Christ; the trinity and the vicarious humanity of Christ. For Torrance, understanding baptism this way solves a number of problems that arise in the typical discussion of baptism. The first is that the objective nature of baptism identifies the appropriateness of infant baptism in its passive response. Questions about the efficacy of baptism are answered because the efficacy resides in Christ and not in any aspect of the ritual. In his description of the New Testament words used for baptism, *baptismos* and *baptisma* Torrance makes an important distinction between the ritual itself identified by Torrance as *baptismos* and the content or meaning of baptism that he identifies as *baptisma*.

Torrance also touches on two important areas of baptism that he left undeveloped; the judgement aspect of baptism and the eschatological nature of baptism.

Also important to note in Torrance's doctrine of baptism is what he does not rely on nor say. Torrance does not place a major emphasis upon the covenant nor use covenantal language. He is also not preoccupied with making a defence of infant baptism. He explains the meaning of baptism and then stated how infant baptism is the most obvious illustration of this meaning.

No theology is without its tensions because of the very nature of what theology is. The tension that appears in Torrance's theology of baptism is between the objective and the subjective, between the then and the now, and between the accomplishment of redemption by Christ and the application by Christ of the benefits of salvation. Tension here does not necessarily identify a fault line but does highlight an area where questions can be asked.

Torrance presents Christ as the baptizer. Does this refer to 'then' and 'now'? 'Then' in Christ's life on earth all were baptized in Christ as he baptized them into his whole humanity. 'Now' post ascension does Christ baptize by the Holy Spirit in his priestly capacity and is this an extra work? Atonement was objectively accomplished but how does it become a subjective reality through baptism?

To expect Torrance's theology to remove all tension is to place too heavy a burden on his doctrine of baptism. In order to gain further insight into what Torrance means by baptism it will be necessary to explore two specific doctrines held by Torrance: union with Christ and the objective/subjective tension associated with participation in Christ. These two doctrines will be considered in chapter four.

Before turning to consider these two doctrines, chapter three will look at the fate of Torrance's doctrine of baptism in the Church of Scotland. This will not only trace the history of how Torrance's doctrine of baptism was received but will provide further exposition of his view of baptism.

Chapter Three: Torrance's work as Convenor of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism

In the previous chapter Torrance's doctrine of baptism was outlined. In the present chapter how that doctrine of baptism was received in the Church of Scotland is explored. In particular the history of baptism in the Church of Scotland from the mid twentieth century to the present as it relates to the work of Torrance is considered. The importance of this history for Westminster theologians is to note how Torrance's argument, that seeks to carry the idea that infant baptism is the primary baptism, fails to be persuasive. Within the Reformed Orthodox Federal Theology tradition there are those who see adult baptism as primary and infant baptism as derivative namely Bavinck, Bannerman and Cunningham.⁴¹⁶ Calvin bases his description of baptism on adult discipleship and there is a disconnect as he moves on to describe infant baptism.⁴¹⁷ Bavinck describes Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments as unclear on how God uses the sacraments to distribute his grace.⁴¹⁸ Many within the Westminster tradition are committed to the idea of using covenant theology to defend infant baptism as the primary baptism.⁴¹⁹ This is usually an argument that is put to Baptists within the evangelical community.⁴²⁰

3.1 Establishing the Special Commission on Baptism

An observation that can be made from an assessment of the commission's report is how clearly it reflects Torrance's theology. It is a considerable achievement for one individual to stamp his ideas on a church commission over a ten year period. Further observations can be made from the discussion on the floor of the General Assembly available in the Verbatim minutes of the Assembly.⁴²¹ Questions were raised about the theological bias of the committee and the neglect of any discussion of the

⁴¹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4; Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*; William Cunningham, *Historical Theology; a Review of the Principal Doctrinal Discussions in the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1960; repr., March 1991).

⁴¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2.

⁴¹⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 470.

⁴¹⁹ Fesko, *Word, Water and Spirit*; Hermon Hanko, *We & Our Children: The Reformed Doctrine of Infant Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1981); Frederick S. Leahy, *Biblical Baptism* (Belfast: Canon Press, 1992); Pierre Marcel and Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism: Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace* (London: J. Clarke, 1953); Murray, *Christian Baptism*; Gregg Strawbridge, *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003); Douglas Wilson, *To a Thousand Generations: Infant Baptism: Covenant Mercy for the People of God* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996).

⁴²⁰ David F. Wright, *Baptism: Three Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009); Paul E. Engle, *Understanding Four Views on Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

⁴²¹ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1956).

traditional issues related to baptism. Comments were also made about the complex way in which the reports were written. These reactions to the reports reveal an air of suspicion and confusion about the commission's work.⁴²²

Torrance dominated the discussion of baptism as convenor of the Church of Scotland's commission on Baptism during the 1950s and early 1960s. However that dominance was short lived. Torrance failed to have the commission's proposal adopted as official church policy on baptism and the subject was not put to rest with the extensive labours of this commission.⁴²³ Before Torrance's death the Church of Scotland adopted a view of baptism that removed any indication of the ten years investigation that Torrance had conducted into baptism.⁴²⁴

Adult baptism now shares a place with infant baptism in the Church of Scotland.⁴²⁵ This chapter will raise the question, 'if Torrance was to begin his work on baptism in today's climate, would he seek to find some allies among Westminster theologians?' and related to that 'would Westminster theologians today be willing to look more closely at Torrance to find a defence of an objective view of infant baptism?' The Westminster tradition needs to note the decision that the Church of Scotland has made to give adult baptism a greater prominence. Does the Church of Scotland's new position resolve the confusion that Bavinck sees in Calvin and might it help to maintain the place of infant baptism if covenant arguments are used to defend its derivative nature?

The reformation left its mark on Scotland, not least on how the sacraments were understood and administered. This was to last from the sixteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century.

In 1562 the *Book of Geneva* often referred to as 'Knox's liturgy' had been prescribed by the General Assembly for its order to include the sacraments.⁴²⁶ This

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 305.

⁴²⁴ Church of Scotland, *By Water and the Spirit: A Commentary on the Services of Baptism and Confirmation* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2006).

⁴²⁵ In an unpublished paper John McPake, referring to the Panel on Doctrine report of 2003 of the Church of Scotland, notes that 'The Panel on Doctrine are moved at this point to comment on the fact that this was the first occasion that the Church of Scotland had made explicit legal provision for the baptism of a person 'upon personal profession of faith'. ' John Lewis McPake, *Contemporary Developments in Baptismal Theology within the Church of Scotland*, p.7. Later in the paper McPake notes that with the passing of Act IX, 2003 that this 'places baptism upon profession of faith as the primary model of baptismal practice, before placing the baptism of the child as the complementary model, albeit that the latter form of baptism is the predominant one witnessed within the Church.' Ibid., p. 11.

⁴²⁶ Gordon Donaldson, 'Reformation to Covenant,' in *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*, eds. Duncan Forrester & Douglas Murray (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), p. 36.

liturgy maintained the view that infant baptism was the primary baptism and that promises were made by parents, based on covenant theology.⁴²⁷ In 1865 the Church Service Society was formed with a view to prepare and publish forms of prayer for Public Worship and the administration of the sacraments.⁴²⁸ ‘When the Church Service Society published *Euchologian* in 1867, this was the first corporately produced service book available to the kirk since John Knox’s *Book of Common Order*.’⁴²⁹ In 1940 the Church of Scotland issued a new *Book of Common Order*. Its baptismal rite relied on material from the Church Service Society’s *Euchologian*.⁴³⁰ The baptismal rite of the 1940 *Book of Common Prayer* received widespread acceptance. However, within a few years there was great concern expressed about the variety of interpretations and practices associated with the administration of baptism across the parishes. This was an unrest that interrupted what had otherwise been a long unperturbed period, as far as the issue of baptism was concerned. Nimmo remarks how the history of baptismal theology and practice in the Church of Scotland has for long periods been a rather uneventful one.⁴³¹ Wright makes a similar point in his summation of the history of baptism in the Church of Scotland, ‘baptism has rarely been high on the theological agenda, and differences have not run deep until relatively recent years.’⁴³² The unrest regarding baptism was related to whose infants should be baptised.⁴³³ The covenant theology undergirding the understanding of baptism insisted that specific promises were required of the parents. Any infant who had one parent or guardian who had been baptised had a right to baptism.⁴³⁴ However a widespread practice of the universal baptizing of babies became the norm because of an increasingly more lenient interpretation on whose

⁴²⁷ Bryan D. Spinks, ‘Freely by His Grace: Baptismal Doctrine and the Reform of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Church of Scotland, 1953-1994,’ in *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honour of Aidan Kavanagh*, eds. Nathan Mitchell & John Baldovin (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 218.

⁴²⁸ ‘About the Society,’ www.churchservicesociety.org/about. Accessed 1 November 2011.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Spinks, ‘Freely by His Grace’, p. 218.

⁴³¹ Paul Nimmo, ‘Baptismal Theology and Practice in the Church of Scotland,’ in *Worship and Liturgy in Context: Studies and Case Studies in Theology and Practice*, eds. Duncan Forrester & Doug Gay (London: SCM Press, 2009), p. 92.

⁴³² Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 304.

⁴³³ A brief outline of the steps leading to the appointment of the Commission is given in the Report of May 1956. Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 3.

⁴³⁴ ‘The Act of Assembly, 1933, vii., said: - “A child has a right to Baptism (1) whose parents, one or both, having been themselves baptized, profess the Christian religion, or (2) who, being of unknown parentage or otherwise separated from its parents, is under Christian care and guardianship.”’ Quoted in Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 3.

child could be baptized. An attempt to resolve what was considered to be an ambiguous practice⁴³⁵ was made by a new Act of Assembly in 1951. But according to Spinks, 'this proved capable of just as many different interpretations.'⁴³⁶ In 1953 the General Assembly set up a special commission on baptism. This was in response to an overture from the Presbytery of Glasgow.⁴³⁷ The Glasgow Presbytery clearly identified the problem as a lack of uniformity in the administration of baptism and a failure on the part of The Church of Scotland to bring about such uniformity. The lack of uniformity and the inability to be able to deal with it was, according to the Glasgow Presbytery, down to the underlying diversity of belief on the meaning of baptism. In the ninth year of the work of the special commission, the report refers back to the Glasgow Presbytery's initial assessment of the problems to be faced, as justification for the length of time that it had taken adequately to consider the issue.⁴³⁸

Torrance was appointed convenor of the commission and John Heron was the secretary. Spinks laments that the names of the other commissioners were not recorded in any of the reports to the General Assembly, but Spinks obtained a list of the original members from Torrance.⁴³⁹ However, the names of those involved in the special commission are listed each year in *The Principal Acts of the General Assembly*.⁴⁴⁰ In correspondence between Torrance and Spinks (letter dated 12 February 1993) Torrance explains to Spinks something of the constitution of the commission and the clear influence that dominated the commission's work:

⁴³⁵ This was not just a Church of Scotland problem but a practice seen across the whole of Christendom as Wright comments 'The universal baptizing of babies formed one of the building blocks of Christendom ...' David F. Wright, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism?: An Enquiry at the End of Christendom*, Didsbury Lectures (Milton Keynes: Patternoster Press, 2005), p. 12.

⁴³⁶ Spinks, 'Freely by His Grace', p. 218.

⁴³⁷ 'Whereas there has been in recent years great dissatisfaction at the lack, within the Church, of uniformity as to conditions required for the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism. And whereas recent changes in the Law of the Church have failed to bring about such uniformity. And whereas the underlying reason for this lack of uniformity is a diversity of belief as to the meaning of Baptism. It is humbly Overtured unto the Venerable the General Assembly by the Presbytery of Glasgow that the General Assembly appoint a Special Commission to carry out a fresh examination of the Doctrine of Baptism, and, through its report to the General Assembly, and in other ways it may find desirable, to stimulate and guide such thought and study throughout the Church as may lead to theological agreement and uniform practice. Or to do otherwise as to your Venerable Court may seem good.' Church of Scotland, *Assembly Papers: Overtures and Cases* (1953).

⁴³⁸ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1962).

⁴³⁹ The original list of members was as follows: The Revs. Professor T.F. Torrance, D. Cairns, D. Baillie, I. Henderson; the Revs. J. MacInnes, G.S. Gunn, J. Wilson Baird, R. S. Wallace, D.G.M. Mackay, J.S. M'Ewen, D.H. Read, D.F.S. Dick, R.S. Loudon, T.D. Stewart Brown, H.C. Donaldson, G.F. Cox, William Barclay, Johnston R.M'Kay, John Heron, Ian A. Muirhead, J.A.M'Fadden, W.C.V. Smith; and James Adair Esq., J.R. Philip Esq. And G. Grant Esq. Ibid., p. 219, fn. 2.

⁴⁴⁰ Church of Scotland, *The Principal Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (May 1953).

However, quite a few of these resigned or fell away, but we were given powers by the Assembly to add to it numbers of people of different types – ‘biblical and patristic scholars, Ministers of experience as Foreign Missionaries, Ministers at large in Scotland, and laymen expert in the fields of education and youth work ... The hard working core, however, came from those who were connected in some way or other with the Scottish Church Society, the Church Service Society, the Scottish Church Theology Society, and particularly from those who were connected in some way or other with the Scottish Journal of Theology.’⁴⁴¹

When Torrance was questioned about the composition of the commission at the General Assembly in May 1956 he said, ‘We have a very widespread representation. I am sorry to say that some of those holding different views (and scholars hold different views) were asked to come on the Commission and they declined.’⁴⁴² The matter of composition of the committee never went away. It was asked again at the 1958 General Assembly. Torrance informed the Assembly that there were 35 ministers on the commission. There had been quite a number of elders but these had lapsed. In a supplementary question it was suggested that it was only possible that one or two could have been involved in the writing of the report. Torrance assured the Assembly that all the members had read and studied the documents.⁴⁴³ Over the period of the reports Torrance was also questioned on several occasions about the number of presbyteries disagreeing and to what extent they disagreed. Questions of this nature seem to harbour the suspicion that the commission did not represent the spectrum of theological views in the church, that not all within the commission were fully involved in the work and that there was rather more dissension among the presbyteries than the reports reflected.

The commission first met 27 October 1953. The commission issued eight reports, the first of which was submitted to the General Assembly in May 1955. Reports would appear each year until 1962. Spinks notes that ‘much of the drafting of the reports was carried out by Torrance and that a “Torrance flavour” to these reports is not too difficult to discern.’⁴⁴⁴

3.1.1 May 1955 Report: The Doctrine of Baptism

The May 1955 report describes its task as four-fold. First, the commission was obliged under its reformed tradition to submit its deliberations to the authority of the

⁴⁴¹ Spinks, ‘Freely by His Grace’, p. 219, fn. 2.

⁴⁴² Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1956), p. 918.

⁴⁴³ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1958), pp. 1150-1151.

⁴⁴⁴ Spinks, ‘Freely by His Grace’, p. 220.

Word of God. Nothing less than a ‘solid Biblical foundation’ was acceptable. Second, within the wider body of the reformed church it was seen as necessary to examine the ‘Scottish tradition in doctrine and practice...’ Third, as these traditions and practices are formulated and brought together careful attention should be given to the advances that have been realised in modern biblical scholarship. Fourth, was the recognition that this was a spiritual task and hence required the help of the Holy Spirit ‘in the formulation of this doctrine in language that can readily be understood, and in the application of the doctrine in the life and practice of the church.’⁴⁴⁵

The report begins by taking up the third aspect of the four-fold task. The prudence of dealing with the subject of baptism now, according to the report’s author arises from a major development in the exegesis of Scripture. No longer is the Scripture subject to human analysis but ‘the resulting solidity and unity of the Biblical teaching withdraws it from our control. In this situation *the Word of God controls us*, and presses upon us a deeper theological understanding of the Scriptures.’⁴⁴⁶ A key development in the new advance in biblical studies was the ability to view the New Testament from a Hebrew perspective, rather than from the traditional grid of the Greek and Hellenic mindset that had shaped so much previous thinking. Already it seems, the way was being paved to address the lack of uniformity in the practice of baptism and the diversity of opinion on the doctrine of baptism through the developments in modern biblical studies.

The important conclusion delivered by the advances in biblical studies with regards to baptism, according to the report, is that ‘the doctrine of Baptism is grounded in the Person and Work of Christ.’⁴⁴⁷ Spinks attributes no little weight to the significance of these words,

These words actually sum up the entire work of the Commission: the doctrine of Baptism was given a firm Christological basis, and the one baptism of Christ and its salvific implications were to be the hermeneutical key to unlock subsequent discussion.⁴⁴⁸

The importance of modern biblical studies, that Torrance as convenor acknowledges, is not so much to introduce a new way of thinking but to take the church back to the way of thinking of the early church fathers. This is an important emphasis that appears frequently in Torrance’s work. Torrance creates an expectation that a new

⁴⁴⁵ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1955).

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁸ Spinks, ‘Freely by His Grace’, p 221.

way of thinking is now possible, but not so new that it is novel, but rather takes the church back to the early church fathers, particularly Irenaeus and Athanasius.

Reverting back to the early church fathers was a trajectory that was embraced by Calvin at the time of the reformation and forms part of the reformation tradition in Scotland.⁴⁴⁹

The report credits the new biblical studies with uncovering certain principles that help reshape the thinking on baptism. Particularly the thinking of the Hebrew world⁴⁵⁰ prevents the typical dualistic thinking of dividing body from soul, form from matter, and the visible from the invisible. This, according to Torrance, touches upon a dualism that dominated the thinking on the sacraments in general. It is not biblically acceptable, he says, to define a sacrament as 'the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.'⁴⁵¹ It is this understanding that Torrance believes accounts for much of the misunderstanding of baptism. 'The New Testament does not employ the language of dualism in regard to the Sacraments, nor does it relate them to grace so much as the Person and Work of Christ, His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again.'⁴⁵² Torrance touches here on two very important points in his theology, first, grace should not be viewed as a commodity. This is not just in opposition to the Roman Catholic idea of created grace but also will involve criticism of the idea that grace is a gift that is in some way separate from the person and work of Christ. Second, when the person and work of Christ is thought of it must embrace the whole incarnational event from birth through to ascension and coming again.⁴⁵³ The report gives a great prominence to the subject of baptism as an important New Testament doctrine, it says,

In many respects the Early Church was right in regarding it (baptism) *as the Great Sacrament or Mystery*, and in thinking of the Lord's Supper as continuous Communion within the unique and all-embracing Sacrament of Baptism by which we are once and for all incorporated into Christ.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1955), p. 4.

⁴⁵⁰ This is a view that is put forward by a number of commentators on Torrance's work. See for example. Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, p. 174; Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh*, p. 33.

⁴⁵¹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1955), p. 5.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Torrance often uses the phrase 'a dimension in depth' to refer to this whole incarnational aspect. He does use this phrase in the report.

⁴⁵⁴ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1955), p. 5.

This incorporation into Christ is a dominant theme in Torrance's theology as all the benefits of Christ are only realised through union with Christ. This new approach, or recovered approach, according to Torrance, means that issues like repentance, faith, and conversion and baptism that have often been taken for granted must now be thought about again under the discipline of the new Biblical exegesis.⁴⁵⁵

With regard to the institution of baptism Torrance sees no real grounds for rejecting the trinitarian formula in the Great Commission.⁴⁵⁶ Passing over the debate on the authority of this trinitarian statement, Torrance engages in setting forth the trinitarian nature of baptism that must be understood in both the Spirit baptism of Pentecost and Christ's own baptism at the Jordan, which was fulfilled in his death and resurrection. Torrance lists a number of trinitarian formulae from the New Testament noting that sometimes the order of persons are interchanged, the important conclusion being the full equality of the persons of the trinity. These trinitarian formulae are unquestioned in the New Testament. The formulae regarding baptism into the name of Christ or baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would appear, argues Torrance, to be two alternative ways of referring to the same thing.⁴⁵⁷

The report distinguishes between the terms *baptisma* and *baptismos*.⁴⁵⁸ It says that *baptismos* refers to the rite itself but *baptisma* has a deeper meaning referring to the vicarious baptism of Christ. The event in the Jordan ought not to be separated from Christ's death on the cross and the sacrament of baptism ought not to be separated from Christ's vicarious baptism,

In the New Testament the Sacrament of Baptism and the vicarious Baptism of Christ are spoken of so indivisibly that it is impossible to distinguish what has been done for us by the Cross and resurrection and what by the Sacrament of that Baptism. It is that union or inseparable relation which is the very meaning of the Sacrament in which we are baptised with Christ's Baptism.⁴⁵⁹

What Torrance has achieved here within the space of his opening paragraphs is to create the expectation of ground breaking change. He achieves this through referring to developments in biblical exegesis and providing some heritage that point to a recovery of the views of the early church fathers, but without providing evidence has

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

plunged the reader into the conclusions of his incarnational theology. The remainder of the report continues to expound Torrance's developed theology and how this relates to baptism.

In order to come to some judgement as to how this report was received it is helpful to examine the comments that Torrance makes in the preface to the second report. A second source to gauge reaction is from the Verbatim Minutes of the Church of Scotland's General Assembly.⁴⁶⁰

In the introduction to the May 1956 report⁴⁶¹, Torrance responds to some of the extensive comment that had been received. The first report (May 1955) was sent to a wide body of theologians outside the Church of Scotland to contribute to the ecumenical debates. Torrance acknowledges that while some presbyteries have disapproved of the report as a whole that this is substantially outweighed by the positive reception that the report has received. Torrance draws attention to the fact that the document was a discussion document and that it had sought at this stage neither the approval nor disapproval of the church. It seems that some had questioned the status of the report and had according to Torrance misunderstood what the purpose of the commission was. In response Torrance recalls the background to how the question concerning baptism arose in the first place.

A number of presbyteries had difficulties in understanding the commission's attitude to Holy Scriptures.⁴⁶² Torrance extracts some relevant parts from the *Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible* drawn up by the study department of the *World Council of Churches*, in support of the commission's approach. Regarding criticism about the doctrinal part of the first report there appears to have been some suggestion that some of the more typical ideas in a discussion of baptism were missing. Torrance explains that the commission was stressing those aspects of the doctrine that tended to be neglected and gave little space to that which is already firmly established.⁴⁶³ Herein lies a problem requiring clarification. Torrance is introducing something new and is critical of what has been accepted. It is not clear on what exactly should be rejected and what should be accepted as firmly established. Torrance is introducing a new theological paradigm in the first report and much of what is said is not recognised as part of the normal

⁴⁶⁰ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1956).

⁴⁶¹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956).

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

discussion of baptism with not enough effort being made in the first report to ground that in either Scripture or from the early church fathers. One of the criticisms was that there was a lack of references to indicate the sources of some of the claims that were made.⁴⁶⁴ In his defence Torrance dismisses many of the criticisms as misunderstandings arising from misleading categories introduced in the post apostolic period. Many of the questions arise because of confusion between the objective and the subjective.

Though Protestants reject the distorted understanding of the Sacraments which is characteristic of Romanism, they tend still to think in individualistic rather than in corporate terms, in psychological rather than in theological terms, in subjective rather than in objective terms. Consequentially the rejection of *ex opere operato* views of the Sacraments tends to become the reduction of them to merely symbolical acts; the stress on faith rather than on works tends to lead to an over-emphasis upon subjective states of emotion, and the biblical conception of regeneration tends to disappear, its place being taken by either moralistic or a pentecostal conception of perfection.⁴⁶⁵

Torrance identifies in these comments the two extremes he opposes. He rejects the Roman Catholic idea of grace being infused through the act of the sacrament and the symbolism of many Protestants who followed the Zwinglian view. Torrance claims to be firmly in the school of Calvin and hopes that this will become clear as the work of the commission progresses. At this point in the report Torrance has made no criticism of Westminster theology and so his opposition to the Roman Catholic view and the Zwinglian view and his claim to be in the line of Calvin mean that he has something in common with the stance of Westminster theology. In the 1956 General Assembly where Torrance presents his report he refers to the considerable reaction to the previous May 1955 Report. Torrance describes the 1955 Report as a provocative document. Some of the criticisms that arose, Torrance explains, were possibly because he produced a 50 page report when really a 150 page report was required.⁴⁶⁶ Torrance also explains that he had really written with another audience in mind, he says,

Part of the 1955 Report was, quite frankly, directed towards certain scholars, and I have to beg the pardon of the Church because it was obvious that there were parts of it that did not seem immediately

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁶⁶ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1956), p. 907.

relevant to those who were not concerned, or who were not familiar with the vast amount of discussion going on.⁴⁶⁷

It is strange that Torrance would use the internal report of the Church of Scotland to reach an external audience. He does refer on a number of occasions to having sent the report to a wide audience. Torrance had a number of publishing avenues to reach a wider audience and it is evident that a number of publications arose from his work in this area.⁴⁶⁸ Torrance apprises the Assembly of the fact that the 1955 Report will be taken up by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, and in fact that as a direct result of the Church of Scotland's report on baptism, the subject of baptism has been put forward as a major subject for the next conference.⁴⁶⁹

Returning to the May 1955 report, it then turns to consider the view and practice of baptism in the early church.⁴⁷⁰ Irenaeus is immediately identified by Torrance as one of the outstanding figures in the early church. Many of the early church fathers were influenced by the Old Testament; seen by the report as a positive influence. The report notes that during the period of the early church fathers the practice of baptism was associated with a period of Christian instruction. Torrance identifies that the chief doctrine taught was 'concerned mostly with the person and work of Jesus Christ.'⁴⁷¹ Reference is made to the work of J.G. Davies to make the point that 'the early Fathers rested the institution of Baptism not so much upon the logion at the end of Matthew as upon the Baptism of Christ Himself.'⁴⁷² Torrance emphasises this point by insisting that 'there can be no doubt that the whole of the Early Church gave the actual Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan a place of importance and prominence that we have largely ignored.'⁴⁷³ Torrance offers no evidence to support this assertion. A number of surveys⁴⁷⁴ have been made of the first four centuries on the subject of baptism and about the only thing that is clear is that the information available is quite

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 909.

⁴⁶⁸ These would include Torrance, *The School of Faith*; H. J. Wotherspoon and J. M. Kirkpatrick, *A Manual of Church Doctrine According to the Church of Scotland*, eds. Torrance T.F. and Wright R. S. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); Robert Bruce, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper* (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1958).

⁴⁶⁹ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1956), p. 910.

⁴⁷⁰ Torrance says 'There were many documents in the early church entirely unknown to Calvin and Knox, and entirely unknown to the western divines.', Ibid., p. 914.

⁴⁷¹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 8.

⁴⁷² Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?*, Library of History and Doctrine (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1961); Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*; Joachim Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism: A Further Study in Reply to Kurt Aland* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1962); Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*.

restricted and leaves it unlikely that any assertion on the subject of baptism from that period can be made with certainty. From the same information many have tried to find evidence to support their understanding and practice of baptism.

The report continues as an exposition of Torrance's incarnational doctrine but presented in such a way that it appears to be the teaching of Irenaeus. Torrance relies heavily upon Irenaeus' recapitulation teaching to support and illustrate his own incarnational theology.

Irenaeus is presented as one of the few church fathers who had not succumbed to the Hellenistic influence so evident in many of the other fathers. To the Hellenistic influence is attributed the development of the idea that grace is a mere commodity.

3.1.2 May 1956 Report: Baptism in the Early Church Fathers

The May 1956 report must have settled many of the questions raised by the report of the previous year, since the preface to the May 1957 report is less defensive. Torrance does not deal with as many queries following the May 1956 report.⁴⁷⁵ The May 1956 report was available in an edition⁴⁷⁶ that the author indicated was available from the Church of Scotland offices.⁴⁷⁷ The May 1956 report examines the doctrine of baptism in the early church fathers.

3.1.3 May 1957 Report: Baptism from Medieval times to the Reformation

The May 1957 Report⁴⁷⁸ traces the subject and practice of baptism from the Medieval Church through to the time of the reformation concluding with a section on the Anglican Church. Torrance notes the dualism in Augustine and the problems that this creates in the understanding of baptism right down to the time of the reformation. Torrance explores Luther's view of baptism but clearly his interest is in what Calvin has to say. The dominant theme stressed by Torrance is Calvin's focus on union with Christ. Much of what was said in the three reports so far considered would find substantial agreement between Torrance and the Westminster theologians. To the

⁴⁷⁵ A marked up copy of the May 1956 Report was found in Karl Barth's library. There is evidence of a very careful reading and underlining of many of the points that indicated an emphasis of incarnational theology. There is no underlining in the third and fourth sections on 'The Early rites of Baptism' and 'The Doctrine of Baptism in the Nicene and Post Nicene fathers. Underlining begins again in the fifth section where Torrance evaluates the early doctrine of Baptism. Copies from the Barth Archive includes literature authored by Torrance that had been sent to Barth and there is evidence of Barth having read these. There is no evidence of any correspondence between Barth and Torrance relating to this report. The materials from the Barth Archive were obtained by Rev Dr Duncan Rankin and these have kindly been made available by Duncan Rankin for the purpose of this research.

⁴⁷⁶ This was a 101 page report offering more extensive references that had been removed from the published May 1956 report.

⁴⁷⁷ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 8.

⁴⁷⁸ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1957).

reader from a Westminster background the reports so far would find acceptance in the rejection of baptismal regeneration and symbolism. Torrance's emphasis of the importance of the trinity, the incarnation and the central importance of union with Christ would all indicate substantial common ground. Without familiarity with Torrance's other writings the concepts presented in the reports would appear unclear, particularly in his soteriology. In a document on baptism the long discussion that seems to shift the soteriological emphasis away from the Passion of Christ to the incarnation would leave the new reader anxious as to what agenda was operating. Coming to the documents expecting a discussion on baptism the reader would be taken by surprise when they find the material is not what is normally expected when the subject of baptism is considered. Torrance is really teaching his new incarnational theology and is trying to educate the readers on a new soteriological paradigm. Embracing a new soteriological paradigm is difficult, and it is especially difficult when the expectation is to find a discussion on baptism and instead the reader is faced with the challenge of a paradigm shift.⁴⁷⁹

3.1.4 May 1958 Report: Baptism in the Church of Scotland

In May 1958 Torrance turns his attention to the development of baptism particularly in the Church of Scotland from pre-reformation times until the mid-nineteenth century. It is in this report that Torrance engages in criticism of Federal Theology. In Chapter Four this criticism will be considered, but for now it is enough to be aware that there are areas of considerable agreement between Torrance and Westminster theology. It is important to consider if Torrance has represented Federal Theology accurately and does the Federalism criticised by him describe the view that all Westminster theologians hold? This is important because the division between Barth and Van Til,⁴⁸⁰ and Torrance and the Federalists leaves two opposing schools of thought today continuing to repeat the same criticism and only occasionally engaging in debate with one another. It will be the assertion later in this research that given the new focus on adult baptism in the Church of Scotland and the removal of any trace of Torrance's influence in this area, that Westminster Theologians and

⁴⁷⁹ A number of recent publications on the subject of baptism contain the typical arguments that someone consulting the subject would expect to find. Wright, *Baptism: Three Views*; Engle, *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*. When reading Torrance on baptism it becomes clear that there is at least a different approach and that this different approach is an attempt to introduce a change in the understanding of the soteriology behind baptism.

⁴⁸⁰ Cornelius Van Til, *Christianity and Barthianism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962).

followers of Torrance's theology might find some support in considering the common ground.⁴⁸¹

Torrance speaks favourably of the tradition from Calvin, Knox and the *Scots Confession*. 'The Scottish Reformation did its utmost to restore to Baptism its full and proper place as one of the two "chief sacraments."' ⁴⁸² According to Torrance a notable feature of *The Book of Common Order* which was used until *The Westminster Directory* came into force is that infant baptism was viewed as the primary form of baptism,⁴⁸³

the Scottish Reformers did not offer a doctrine of Baptism primarily applicable to adults and then seek to adapt it to infants. For them Baptism by its very nature as the sacrament of our first entrance into God's Household was essentially relevant for children, but therefore equally adaptable to adults who can enter into the Kingdom of God as little children.⁴⁸⁴

Torrance refers to a number of preachers and professors who served the church beginning at the start of the sixteenth century. In these men Torrance found the exposition of the classical reformed doctrine but also notably a 'certain special emphases which contributed to its later distortion.'⁴⁸⁵ In particular Torrance is concerned about the separation of justification and sanctification, where justification is seen in Christ, but sanctification is seen as a progressive matter. When sanctification is viewed as an effect of justification this becomes divorced from union with Christ. 'This means that when the strong emphasis on union with Christ becomes weakened, as happened later, justification needs to be supplemented by a life of good works before we can be saved.'⁴⁸⁶

Torrance reserves most of his criticism for Robert Rollock's contribution to Federalism. Torrance quotes from Rollock to provide a sparse outline of Rollock's views on the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. Torrance then draws his own inference from Rollock, 'while those who have faith in Christ then under the covenant of grace for their justification or redemption, they are nevertheless still

⁴⁸¹ It is not the intention to imply that all who follow Torrance's theology agree with him on baptism. Some seem to draw their understanding of Westminster from Torrance and it is suggested in this thesis that that is perhaps not the best practice and that there might be benefits for all in attempting to establish some common ground. For example see Myk Habets and Bobby Grow, (eds) *Evangelical Calvinism: Essays Resourcing the Continuing Reformation of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

⁴⁸² Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1958), p. 12.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

under the covenant of works in so far as their nature is still unregenerate.⁴⁸⁷

However Rollock states, ‘Know this then, that to such as be in Christ, the covenant of works to them is abolished, and of none effect so far forth as by it justification and salvation is obtained.’⁴⁸⁸ This is not the place to assess Torrance presentation of Federalism.⁴⁸⁹ However, if there is common ground between Torrance and Westminster apart from the issue of Federalism, then this common ground should be explored. Also if Federalism has been misunderstood or misrepresented, then perhaps a clearer assessment of Federalism and a recognition of to what degree it is held by Westminster theologians might offer the prospect of acknowledging yet further common ground and there might be room to listen to one another more carefully on the subject of baptism.⁴⁹⁰

Torrance introduces the Westminster tradition in Chapter Four of the May 1958 Report. The report explains that many were ready for the introduction of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* in Scotland because of decade’s long struggles with Arminianism and Socinianism. Torrance describes the Westminster theologians as scholastic Calvinists and identifies his own line of theology as Evangelical Calvinism.⁴⁹¹ Torrance does acknowledge that there were different extremes in Federal Theology and he views *The Westminster Confession of Faith* as having a ‘comparatively moderate form of federal theology.’⁴⁹² This is an important point and provides some basis for a discussion between Torrance and Westminster’s view of baptism. Better progress can be made in discussion when using the worst extreme to represent a whole group is avoided.⁴⁹³ In his criticism of Westminster theology,

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁸⁸ Robert Rollock, *Select Works of Robert Rollock*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), p. 37.

⁴⁸⁹ Spinks appears to at least raise the possibility that the reports may have been unfair in their treatment of Federal Theology. ‘It is not the intention of this essay to scrutinize the Special Commission’s Biblical doctrine or whether the reports gave fair treatment to Federal Theology.’ Spinks, ‘Freely by His Grace’, p. 229.

⁴⁹⁰ Throughout his works, Torrance, when dealing with Federalism raises the issues associated with a number of pastoral problems such as legalism, a lack of assurance, individualism and piety. These are certainly real problems but the effort to find a solution is not served well by not distinguishing the various schools of thought within Federalism.

⁴⁹¹ This is a term that he uses in Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John Mcleod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

⁴⁹² Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1958), p. 30.

⁴⁹³ The discussion on union with Christ that has received considerable attention in the past few decades demonstrates much common ground between Torrance and some Westminster Theologians. The debate between Charles Hodge and John Williamson Nevin on the Lord’s Supper with a number of Westminster theologians favouring Nevin establishes common ground. A number of Westminster theologians have demonstrated a commitment to liturgy. The liturgical recovery has brought with it a renewed emphasis on the sacraments though this is seen more clearly in the Lord’s Supper than with

Torrance is most critical of the idea of limited atonement.⁴⁹⁴ Torrance notes a change in emphasis in sermons in the post-Westminster period. In the pre-Westminster period the focus was upon Christ and after Westminster ‘the attention was directed toward spiritual experience and assurance of faith. The practical application is directed toward inner sanctification and personal covenanting.’⁴⁹⁵ In Torrance’s views this internalising of religion became increasingly subjective.

3.1.5 May 1959 Report: Baptism from 1843-1959

The May 1959 Report brings the survey of the history of baptism up to date covering the period 1843-1959. In the introduction to the report Torrance reminds the reader that in the review of history

we can trace the elements of strength in each of the traditions that have now come together in the life of our national Church, and at the same time see influences which have at various points, tended to lead us in mistaken directions.⁴⁹⁶

Torrance identifies three of these negative influences as: 1. The contradiction between Federal Theology and the Gospel of Grace; 2. The divorce of the Atonement from the Incarnation; 3. The separation of the Church Visible from the Church Invisible. Torrance attributes to *The Calvin Translation Society* the credit for an increased evangelistic and missionary outlook through the new translations of Calvin’s works. According to the report this new outlook helped to undermine the rationalistic tendencies of the Federal Theology. The rationalistic tendency and the emphasis upon the intellect was to see the sacraments marginalised. The sacraments became relatively unimportant and looked upon ‘merely as acts through which the converted give outward expression to their inward spiritual condition.’⁴⁹⁷ Torrance has identified some trends that he says have led to hyper-Calvinism and a lack of missionary and evangelistic zeal. There are many Westminster theologians who are

baptism. D. G. Hart and J. R. Muether, *With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002); K. A. Mathison, *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002); H. O. Old, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); J. G. Bonomo, *Incarnation and Sacrament: The Eucharistic Controversy between Charles Hodge and John Williamson Nevins* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010); T. L. Johnson, *Leading in Worship: A Sourcebook for Presbyterian Students and Ministers Drawing Upon the Biblical and Historic Forms of the Reformed Tradition*. (Oak Ridge: The Covenant Foundation, 1996).

⁴⁹⁴ Peterson from the Westminster tradition has acknowledged that it is not with any degree of certainty that ‘limited atonement’ was a doctrine taught by Calvin. R. A. Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement* (Fearn: Mentor, Christian Focus Publications, 1999).

⁴⁹⁵ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1958), p. 39.

⁴⁹⁶ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1959), p. 3.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

aware of the tendencies raised by Torrance.⁴⁹⁸ So along with the other areas of common ground mentioned previously, there is some agreement that individualism, hyper-Calvinism, lack of assurance and rationalism has and is a problem among some within the Westminster tradition.

Torrance identifies a number of trends that have had an influence on the practice of baptism. One of particular importance here is liturgical renewal. This renewal led to the production of many books on liturgy. Torrance distinguishes this renewal in Scotland from the liturgical renewal in England. The Scottish renewal was not

a movement of romantic self-expression. The emphasis was laid on the primacy of God's action to which we respond in praise and prayer, though it must be admitted that the movement did not escape the prevailing subjectivism, as many of the hymns of the period clearly show.⁴⁹⁹

Torrance refers to the High Church Calvinist movement represented by *A Manual of Church Doctrine* by H.J. Witherspoon and J.M. Kirkpatrick. Torrance published an edited version of this manual the year after this report was written. A second edition was published in 1965. In the report, Torrance summarises the manual and casts it in a favourably light. The extent of Torrance's editorial changes can be found in Appendix Two and an assessment of these changes is discussed in Chapter Four.

In a section entitled *Church Practice* Torrance negatively notes that many of the Service Books published in the early part of the nineteenth century reflected what he saw as a rationalised form of Federal Theology. However these developments in the liturgy were indications that some sought a greater degree of liturgical form. Torrance is clearly in favour of the more liturgical form in worship.⁵⁰⁰ In many Westminster churches today there is a greater interest in liturgy and an attempt to celebrate the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁸ A number of these authors would be, R. Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2009); R. Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2011); R. B. Gaffin Jr., 'Justification and Union with Christ,' in *Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*, eds. David W Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2008); R. B. Gaffin Jr., 'Union with Christ: Some Biblical and Theological Reflections,' in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed., Andrew T. B. McGowan (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006); Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008); M. S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

⁴⁹⁹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1959), p. 5.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Record,' *The Church Service Society*.

⁵⁰¹ Wolterstorff, 'The Reformed Liturgy,'; Mathison, *Given for You*.

Torrance sums up the position and condition of the Church of Scotland at the end of the 1950s in quite positive terms.

In the *Book of Common Order* (1940) we see a gathering together of the various strands of our Scottish tradition: the theological teaching of men like J.S. Candlish and H.R. Mackintosh from the Free Church side, the theological emphasis upon worship of men like H.J. Wotherspoon and J. M. Kirkpatrick from the Established Church, the Christological emphasis of the Secession tradition, the missionary orientation of men in each part of the divided Church, and not least the Biblical Theology of men like William Milligan, A.B. Davidson, James Denney, H.A.A. Kennedy and William Manson.⁵⁰²

While Torrance is encouraged by the developments that he lists above, nevertheless there are still tensions that remain. Torrance refers again to the struggle with Westminster theology, but he identifies the greatest tension to be with the liberal section of the Church. Once again there is common ground here in that the Westminster theologians would support Torrance in his opposition to liberal teaching.

Torrance concludes the historical survey of the teaching on baptism in Scotland with an assessment of Scottish Baptist teaching on baptism.

3.1.6 May 1960 Report: Towards a Theology of Baptism and Torrance's Correspondence with Barth

The May 1960 report is the beginning of the work of preparing a synthesis on the teaching of baptism. Torrance seeks to maintain a clear distinction between two traditions and reinforces this in his assessment of the Subordinate Standards. The Westminster Confession and Catechisms are, claims the report, largely in accord with Holy Scripture but they make use of certain unbiblical forms of thought. However the teaching of the *Scots Confession* of 1560 and of the reformation catechisms is closer to the New Testament than that of the Westminster Standards.⁵⁰³ Torrance identifies ten difficulties that he has with the Westminster Standards. This serves as a useful summary of Torrance's grievance with Westminster theology and will prove to be a helpful guide in comparing Westminster theology with Torrance's theology in Chapter Four.

The report is divided into two sections: Part I is a summary of the Doctrine of Baptism and Part II – A Form of Instruction about Baptism.

⁵⁰² Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1959), p. 23.

⁵⁰³ This idea is developed more fully in Torrance, *The School of Faith*.

Torrance sent this May 1960 report to Barth and Barth responded with some criticism. No copy of the May 1960 report could be found in the Barth archive but it is clear from Barth's letter to Torrance that it is this report that he is referring to. Torrance's reply to Barth's letter was also in the Barth archive.⁵⁰⁴

Barth writes to Torrance in April 1960 thanking him for providing the 1960 Report. He expresses his particular interest in the document because he is at that time working on baptism in the *Church Dogmatics* series. He expresses regret that he will not be able to meet up with Torrance at Barth's University's anniversary event. Barth is not even sure, that given his state of health that he will be able to attend never mind engaging in discussion on baptism, so he is only able to indicate briefly what he thinks about the report by letter.

Barth praises Torrance for the serious nature of the consideration on baptism and the well planned work. He expresses his agreement with Torrance in his criticism of the Westminster Standards and also appreciates his Christological emphasis. He says that the Christological amendments that Torrance has made to the traditional teaching are unmistakably clear.⁵⁰⁵ However, Barth does express some concern precisely in this area. He questions whether baptism can be seen as a continuation of the incarnation. Barth is concerned that Torrance has lost the role of the church in baptism. In reply to this criticism Torrance expresses amazement that Barth could find that notion anywhere, 'That is an idea we have always repudiated – it amazes me that you can find it anywhere.'⁵⁰⁶

Barth also questions why Torrance has referred to baptism as a 'means of grace' and a 'sacrament' and suggests that Torrance has resorted back to the Confessions that he has already criticised. Torrance in reply stresses that only Part I of the document is important and that the appendix to Part I is only for discussion. Torrance says that not once does it refer to baptism as a means of grace or a sacrament in Part I of the report.

Barth's third major criticism is emphasised in the body of his letter by prefacing his comment with the salutation, 'My dear Mr Torrance'. Barth enquires about the

⁵⁰⁴ In correspondence between Duncan Rankin and the custodian of the Barth archive it is clear that Torrance no longer had copies of his correspondence with Barth, and Duncan Rankin was seeking to obtain not only copies for his own research but copies for Torrance. Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance*.

⁵⁰⁵ Karl Barth, 8 April 1960. 'Die christologische Korrektur, der Sie die überlieferte lehre unterzogen haben ist ja unverkennbar.'

⁵⁰⁶ T. F. Torrance, 19 April 1960.

strange doctrine of the two languages referred to in Part II of the May 1960 Report. He also questions what is meant by calling the children ‘the seed of the faithful’. In reply Torrance defends and explains his use of the concept of two languages,

Yes it is strange, but it is a fact which we cannot deny that our permanent and only authoritative language is that of the Bible – yet every Church develops its own traditional forms and habits of speech. What we say is that the latter has always to be corrected and reformed by the Word of God. If we did not recognise the fact that this is the case in every Church, would we not confuse the current language for the Word of God? What we have sought to do, then, is to put our report forward only in Biblical language or language that is true to the Biblical teaching – and so have excluded confessional language from Part I.⁵⁰⁷

Barth recognises that there is some ‘new wine’ in the report but from page 8 on he finds himself in a ‘jungle’ of questions. These old questions, says Barth, were questions he could not answer until he took a radically new approach. Barth expresses sadness that Torrance did not dare to take this new approach. On a personal note Barth hopes that Torrance will not be angry with him for being so forthright in his criticism. In reply Torrance says that Barth has not really noticed what is radically new, and that is the difference between *baptisma* and *baptismos*. Torrance writes,

I grant that if we were to put your meaning of ‘Baptism’ into these passages, we would react with horror as you have done. But then that would be to read the old traditional idea of Baptism into them, which is precisely what we have set behind us in Part I entirely.⁵⁰⁸

Barth’s misunderstanding is a good example of the difficulty faced by Torrance as he tries to get his audience to think along the lines of his new paradigm. If Barth can misunderstand Torrance here, then others will undoubtedly misunderstand Torrance. Many have chosen to ignore Torrance because they do not understand how his teaching fits into the discussion on baptism.

The second point of importance is to note that Torrance wants Barth to see that the *baptisma/baptismos* distinction is radically new. However in his discussion and presentation of this he presents this as a teaching held by the early church.

Torrance does add that he is unhappy about Part II of the document and some of the language that is used there. Torrance explains to Barth that he did try to persuade the commission not to seek the church’s blessing on that part, but just to use it as a

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

basis for discussion. This comment serves as a reminder that while Torrance's ideas may dominate the commission, there are others with editorial involvement compiling this document. In fairness to Torrance, this means that when attributing any statement to Torrance from the reports that some other supporting evidence should be sought in his other works.

Torrance provides an interesting single sentence summary of baptism at the end of his letter to Barth,

From beginning to end we have sought to understand Baptism in terms of the vicarious obedience of Christ the Servant, rather than of our act, and only of our act in obedience to His command to baptise, which so witnesses to Him what it is in Him and not in the rite at all that the whole meaning lies.⁵⁰⁹

3.1.7 May 1961 Report

In the May 1961 Report Torrance responds to some of the difficulties that he perceives people to have. It is interesting that he first takes up the difficulty of those who attempt to find the meaning of baptism in the external rite, instead of in Christ alone. This was the point made by Torrance when responding to Barth's comments on the report from the previous year.

Torrance refers to the Faith and Order Department of the World Council of Churches entitled *One Lord, One Baptism*. While Torrance was a member of the Faith and Order Commission on Baptism, up to this point he had been unable to attend.⁵¹⁰ Torrance is encouraged that 'the doctrinal statement we now set before the Assembly is in full and substantial agreement with this ecumenical account of Baptism.'⁵¹¹ Torrance also refers to the removal of Part II of the previous year's report and to the removal of the comment about two languages which he acknowledges caused confusion. This was one of the points raised by Barth.

The report states that the preamble should make it unambiguously clear that the norm of baptism is infant baptism, as in John Knox's *Book of Common Order*.

3.1.8 May 1962 Report

In the final report of the commission in May 1962 Torrance still finds himself having to respond to those who do not understand the document. Again Torrance

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Torrance comments on the Faith and Order document saying 'although I have been on that Commission for the last two years before this document was written I was unable to attend, so that I can speak about it objectively ...' *Church of Scotland, Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1961), p.1049.

⁵¹¹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1961), p. 612.

explains that those who have been radically critical of the document have really been trying to interpret it from a standpoint that is quite alien to it. Torrance explains that all along the commission has tried to ‘expound the doctrine of Baptism in the light of the Gospel itself, and particularly in the light of the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.’⁵¹²

An overture was sent down by the General Assembly under the Barrier Act proposing that it be recognized as authoritative interpretation of the biblical and reformed doctrine of baptism as contained in the primary and subordinate standards of the Church. David Wright notes that this was frustrated and that ‘The Assembly merely noted its acceptance by a majority of presbyteries as a valid statement of biblical and Reformed doctrine and commended it to general consideration.’⁵¹³ The document was later published in 1966 by St Andrews Press under the title *The Doctrine of Baptism*. The Act of 1963 is published in an Appendix along with questions that could be asked of those who bring children to baptism.

The Doctrine of Baptism is a much briefer document than the 1955 Report which was published in 1958 under the title *The Biblical Doctrine of Baptism: A Study Document issued by The Special Commission on Baptism of the Church of Scotland*.

The description of baptism given in *The Doctrine of Baptism* reflects the content of the annual reports of the commission previously discussed. Therefore it will be only necessary at this point to refer to the Act of 1963 itself.

The Act sets out what child may be baptized. The significant change that the Act XVII, 1963 introduces is the removal of the statement ‘A child has a right to baptism’ previously stated in the Act VII, 1933. The emphasis is now placed on the parents as opposed to the right of the child.

Nimmo notes that the work of the commission ‘seems to move into fresh theological terrain for the Church of Scotland ...’⁵¹⁴ In his assessment of the commission’s reports Nimmo notes that the reports seem

to shift the balance of emphasis from the covenant with Christ to the person of Christ: from the promises made by those undergoing Baptism (or, more normally, their parents) to the promises fulfilled by Jesus Christ.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1962), p. 710.

⁵¹³ Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 305.

⁵¹⁴ Nimmo, ‘Baptismal Theology and Practice in the Church of Scotland’, p. 98.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

This shift away from using the reformed covenantal theology had previously been noted by Kay in his criticism of the American Presbyterian 1993 *Book of Common Worship* and the 1994 *Common Order of the Church of Scotland*.⁵¹⁶ While the Church of Scotland did not accept the work of the Special Commission on Baptism, yet notwithstanding Torrance's influence is seen on the 1994 *Common Order of the Church of Scotland*.

3.2 Beyond the Work of the Special Commission

The work of the special commission did not resolve the diversity of practice in the Church of Scotland. In the years following the 1963 Act 'discontent continued in the Church of Scotland. A wide variety of baptismal practice continued, particularly in respect of implementing the "conditions" of the 1963 Act under which baptism might be allowed.'⁵¹⁷

The 1981 General Assembly sought to address this problem and instructed the Panel of Doctrine to investigate the state of baptismal practice in the Church.

In 1983, The Panel on Doctrine reported to the General Assembly on the pastoral problems which the 1963 Act gave rise to in the Church of Scotland. It further recognises the failure in those baptised as infants to later keep their baptismal vows and it condemns entirely the practice of indiscriminate infant baptism. The 1983 report endorses the theology and conclusions of the Special Commission on Baptism, speaking approvingly of infant baptism and endorsing the previous focus on the vicarious nature of baptism.

The publication of the World Council of Churches document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM) in 1982 almost certainly made the return to the subject of baptism by the Church of Scotland inevitable. Nimmo believes that the 1983 Panel on Doctrine made their condemnation of indiscriminate baptism of infants as a direct response to BEM's condemnation of the same.

In a strange twist, McPake, in an unpublished paper, notes that the Report of the Board of World Mission and Unity submitted a report to the General Assembly in

⁵¹⁶ 'What is glaringly missing from the statement on baptism in both rites is any mention of even the word 'covenant'. Considering that covenant theology provides the dogmatic basis for infant baptism in the Reformed churches, the failure of these new rites to present clearly the 'covenant of grace, with baptism as its sign and children as its authorized recipients, is more than surprising. Whatever the reason for this oversight, such a silence borders on liturgical malpractice. The absence here of a compelling statement of baptism's connection to God's covenant leaves the subsequent allusions to it without a sufficient foundation or context.' James F. Kay, 'The New Rite of Baptism: A Dogmatic Assessment,' in *To Glorify God: Essays on Modern Reformed Liturgy*, eds. Brian Spinks and Iain Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), p. 203.

⁵¹⁷ Nimmo, 'Baptismal Theology and Practice in the Church of Scotland', p. 102.

1985 and had it approved. This report expressed agreement with the ecumenical report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, that both infant and believers' baptism should be equivalent alternatives.⁵¹⁸

In 1990 the General Assembly received an overture from the Presbytery of Hamilton seeking to revert back to the 1933 Act reinstating the right of the child to have baptism. The Verbatim minutes of the 1990 Assembly records Torrance expressing his qualms and reservations about the 1963 Act.⁵¹⁹ Torrance believed the Act to be too restrictive and he cited examples of how certain ministers had not baptised anyone for one or two years because they could not discern the signs of regeneration in the parents, or the sponsors of the child. Torrance objected to the statement about the child having a right, 'No one has a right to grace; grace is the unmerited, free gift of God.'⁵²⁰ Torrance proposed an amendment so that the words *A child has a right to baptism* would be replaced with *A child may not be prevented from being brought to baptism*. Torrance's amendment was accepted by the assembly. The amended overture was referred to the Panel of Doctrine. The Panel of Doctrine reported to the 1991 General Assembly with a revised proposal but this was not accepted by the General Assembly.

As the twentieth century drew to a close there was still a great diversity evident in the practice of baptism in the Church of Scotland. Accompanying the diversity of practice was a growing unrest over both practice and stated belief regarding baptism. In 1999 a report on how the 1963 Act had impacted the Church was compiled, offering a generally positive conclusion. Yet for the first time the opposition of those opposed to infant baptism was recorded along with a recording of the dissenting voices of those who objected to the requirement to establish parental faith.

In 1999 the General Assembly resolved to

remit the Report on Infant Baptism and Mission and Evangelism in the Church of Scotland: 1963-1997 to the Panel on Doctrine for consideration with the Committee on Mission and Evangelism Resources in the light of wider and recent theological reflection on baptism with a request that a Report be made to a future General Assembly.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁸ McPake, *Contemporary Developments in Baptismal Theology within the Church of Scotland*, p. 4-5. Kindly supplied by the author.

⁵¹⁹ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (1990), p. 362.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

⁵²¹ Church of Scotland, *Report to the General Assembly* (May 2000), p. 13/23.

A working party engaged in a survey of the Acts of Assembly governing the practice of baptism in the Church of Scotland listing four Acts, 1712, 1933, 1951, and 1963. Consideration was also given to the *Reports of the Special Commission on Baptism*. It was pertinent that 'it was noted that there was an assumption in these acts and documents that the norm in the Church of Scotland was infant baptism.'⁵²² A number of new questions were beginning to arise: did the emphasis on infant baptism lower the profile of baptism on profession of faith; does the balance between both practices of baptism need to be redressed in the desire for a unified theology of one baptism; does changes in the relationship between church and society require changes in baptismal practice, and does recent theological discussions demand a change? A brief report from the Panel on Doctrine was given to the 2001 General Assembly noting that the work on baptism was well advanced.⁵²³

In 2002 the Panel of Doctrine reported their findings to the General Assembly.⁵²⁴ They had revisited the *Reports of the Special Commission on Baptism*; had studied the positions of the continental theologians writing from a reformed perspective and referred to several contemporary ecumenical documents. The conclusion drawn was that the consensus advocating infant baptism as the norm, which prevailed from the sixteenth century onwards was now increasingly being questioned.⁵²⁵ It appears that the work of the commission and Torrance's labours were about to be unravelled. The Panel of Doctrine felt that the time was right for a contemporary statement of the doctrine of baptism.

In 2003 the Panel of Doctrine offered its statement on baptism.⁵²⁶ The 2003 report is described by Nimmo as setting 'forth something of a paradigmatic change in the baptismal doctrine of the Church of Scotland and a parallel reshaping of the law of the Church in relation to baptism.'⁵²⁷ Nimmo may have overstated the case on the extent of the agreement between the 2003 report with the earlier Special Commission.⁵²⁸ Nimmo is correct that the 2003 Report reflects a Christocentrism, but it has to be noted that the incarnational soteriological paradigm espoused by Torrance no longer undergirds the stated doctrine of baptism. The language used

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Church of Scotland, *Report to the General Assembly* (May 2001), p. 13/22.

⁵²⁴ Church of Scotland, *Report to the General Assembly* (May 2002).

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Church of Scotland, *Report to the General Assembly* (May 2003).

⁵²⁷ Nimmo, 'Baptismal Theology and Practice in the Church of Scotland', p. 104.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

may sound similar but the theology undergirding the doctrine has changed. A commentary on this report was prepared and published in 2006 entitled, *By Water and the Spirit: A Commentary on the services of baptism and confirmation*.⁵²⁹

The major change contained is ‘The primary image of baptism in the New Testament is that of a person being baptised upon personal profession of faith.’⁵³⁰ The detail of how this conclusion was arrived at is not of immediate concern for this work. The point to stress here is that Torrance’s work had been overturned. The reasons why this happened are many and varied but certainly of importance is the fact that tactically Torrance found himself without many theological allies on the doctrine of baptism. Torrance found himself in opposition on many fronts. He was opposed to the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration, he opposed the Zwinglian symbolism view. Within the instrumental category Torrance was in agreement with the practice and the emphasis of the Westminster theologians on infant baptism. But Torrance attempted to import into the defence of infant baptism a great deal of the incarnational theology of Karl Barth. However, for Barth, his theology led to the practice of baptism on profession of faith. Torrance was attempting to steer a difficult course which led to isolation. Employing Barth’s incarnational theology but at odds with Barth on baptism, agreeing with Westminster practice on infant baptism but at odds with their theology Torrance had to fight his battles on many fronts. It is a statement about the stature of the man that he was able to dominate the commission’s work for such a period of time.

Torrance sought to secure the primacy of infant baptism and launched out on this quest reserving his severest criticism for those who at least shared his practice of infant baptism.

There is still a place for infant baptism in the Church of Scotland. The Act of V 2000 was amended in 2003 and appears to give equal weight to baptism upon profession of faith and the baptism of a child. However the order of appearance is first baptism of a person on profession of faith, baptism of a person with learning difficulties and finally baptism of a child.

When in 1953 Torrance set out on his work on baptism, the role of infant baptism was certainly being questioned. Little did Torrance then think that on the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of his work on baptism that the Church of Scotland

⁵²⁹ Church of Scotland, *By Water and the Spirit*.

⁵³⁰ Church of Scotland, *Report to the General Assembly* (May 2003), p. 13/8.

would have placed such emphasis on baptism upon profession of faith. Torrance of course was attempting two things, defend infant baptism and introduce a new incarnational paradigm. No doubt Torrance would argue that the incarnational paradigm was the greatest defence of an objective infant baptism, but Barth thought otherwise. Were the new incarnational paradigm and the defence of infant baptism too much to achieve? If Torrance were to begin his work again today from the position where infant baptism is no longer viewed as the primary baptism, would he have tried to find support in some wing of the Church, particularly among Westminster theologians who share many of his concerns and who welcome many of the doctrines that he chose to emphasise? Was it a strategic and doctrinal error not to underpin the practice of infant baptism with covenant theology?

In chapter Four the similarities and differences between the Torrance and Westminster paradigms will be considered in an attempt to discover to what degree they can support each other on the doctrine of infant baptism.

Chapter Four: A Quest to find the Real Torrance

In Chapter One Torrance's doctrine of baptism was seen to be influenced by Barth's theology and certain aspects of Barth's doctrine of baptism. The ecumenical and liturgical renewal movements provided the occasion for the doctrine of baptism to be considered by Torrance. In particular the liturgical renewal movement provided the opportunity for Torrance to communicate his soteriological paradigm. An assessment of these revisions made by Torrance provides a useful resource to help identify how Torrance believes soteriology needs to change.

In chapter two we outlined Torrance's doctrine of baptism and highlighted some doctrinal themes that were especially important to his doctrine of baptism. In the previous chapter we traced the path that Torrance's doctrine of baptism took in the Church of Scotland. We not only outlined the history but further sought to elucidate his doctrine of baptism.

In this chapter we will probe in more detail two of the doctrinal themes, identified in Chapter Two, to clarify the important and unique contribution that Torrance made to the doctrine of baptism. These two themes are union with Christ and human participation in Christ.

A further aspect of study that will help to establish that Torrance has a new paradigm to introduce is to examine his use of sources. Specific attention will be given to his use of Irenaeus and Athanasius where it will be shown that Torrance takes up their ideas and develops their theology, but at times without making it clear to the reader when he is quoting and when he is developing ideas.

The place where Torrance reveals most clearly his own new paradigm is in the context of liturgical renewal. Torrance revises Wotherspoon's and Kirkpatrick's *Manual of Church Doctrine*.⁵³¹ It is revealing to note in this revision the passages that Torrance changes and how he makes those changes.

The final consideration of the chapter will be taken up with Torrance's criticism of Westminster theology. It is appropriate to deal with this at this point before comparing and contrasting Torrance's doctrine of baptism with Westminster's doctrine of baptism. It is the contention here that Torrance has criticised a caricature of Westminster theology. The temptation here is to ignore Torrance completely because he is thought to have created 'straw men'. However, many of Torrance's general criticisms have merit and these can be too easily overlooked because his

⁵³¹ Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick, *A Manual of Church Doctrine*.

detailed criticism has been dismissed. The purpose of dealing with Torrance's criticism of Westminster theology follows on from the consideration of his use of Calvin on union with Christ, the church fathers and editing of the *Manual of Church Doctrine*. It is an attempt to clarify Torrance's distinct voice but also to clarify his interlocutor's voice in preparation for considering what synthesis can exist between Westminster and Torrance on the doctrine of baptism.

4.1 The Key Doctrines Identified in Torrance's Doctrine of Baptism

Torrance's writing on baptism is undergirded by his understanding of union with Christ and the objective/subjective tension associated with participation in Christ. These two doctrines are the keys that help distinguish the particular contribution that Torrance makes to the debate on baptism. Before turning attention to Torrance's doctrine of union with Christ as it relates to baptism it is important to understand Torrance's use of the *homoousion*, the *hypostatic union* and the relationship between the *anhypostatic* and the *enhypostatic*.

4.1.1 The *Homoousion*

Torrance poses the question, 'Who is Jesus Christ?'⁵³² To which Christology is compelled to reply, 'God and man in one Person: and therefore speaks of the being and person of Jesus Christ in terms of his reality in God and of God himself in terms of his self-revelation and self communication in this man'.⁵³³ This profound relationship lies at the very heart of the Christian message for Torrance.⁵³⁴ The acknowledgement of this mystery must include, 'wonder and thankfulness, in adoration and praise.'⁵³⁵ Torrance encourages this doxological approach to the person of Christ. He believes that theology is meant to be lived and prayed and sung. The Nicene Creed's contribution to this doxological approach was the 'crucial concept of the *homoousion* or the consubstantial relation between Jesus Christ and God himself.'⁵³⁶ This theological insight dominated Christian thinking.

The basic clue with which those Church theologians worked, as we can see in the Council of Nicea in the early fourth century, was the Father/Son or Son/Father

⁵³² Thomas F. Torrance, *Outline of the Doctrine of Christ, New College Lectures* (The University of Edinburgh), p. 1. This is an introductory outline lecture that remains unpublished. A lecture with this title has been published but it appears to be a version of the one quoted from here. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*.

⁵³³ Torrance, *Outline of the Doctrine of Christ*.

⁵³⁴ 'In Jesus Christ, something has taken place within our human and creaturely being which profoundly affects our human existence and life.', Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

relationship. They developed this clue through careful exegesis of a host of biblical passages in which they sought to distil the essential heart of the Gospel and the fundamental relations which it involved.⁵³⁷

This theological insight was incorporated within an ecumenical creed in the church. Torrance enthused about the creed and called the *homoousion* the ‘king-pin’ or ‘linchpin’ of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. For Torrance then the primary significance of the *homoousion* was its assertion that Jesus is God, and that as God he speaks equally with the Father in the one being of the Godhead.⁵³⁸ Torrance is usually quite definite in his rejection of any human invention or imposition in theology but he is quite defensive regarding the use of the *homoousion*:

Far from imposing an alien meaning upon the evangelical witness, theological language of this kind is adapted under the impact of divine revelation to convey the message of the Gospel, so that in spite of the inadequacy of human language in itself it is made to indicate divine realities beyond its natural capacity and is to be understood in their light.⁵³⁹

To Torrance the claim of Christ’s divinity in relation to the oneness in being between the Father and the Son is built upon God in his relation to himself and not upon some *a priori* human presupposition. ‘What the *homoousion* did was to give expression to the ontological substructure upon which the meaning of various biblical texts rested and through which they were integrated.’⁵⁴⁰ Torrance believed that the *homoousion* expressed the essential context of the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ ‘in which faith in Christ perfectly coincides with faith in God.’⁵⁴¹

Torrance draws attention to yet a further important concept embraced by the term *homoousion*. He says that if the Son is eternally begotten of the Father within the being of the Godhead, then *homoousion*, while referring to the oneness in being between the Father and the Son, expresses at the same time the distinction between them that obtains within that oneness: ‘For nothing can be *homoousion* with itself, but one thing *homoousion* with another’, thus, ‘while the Father and the Son are the same

⁵³⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), p. 53.

⁵³⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p. 133.

⁵³⁹ Thomas F. Torrance (ed.), *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed A.D. 381* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), p. xii.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁵⁴¹ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, p. 114.

being they are eternally distinct for the Father is unchangeably the Father and not the Son and the Son is unchangeably the Son and not the Father.⁵⁴²

This doctrine is so pivotal for Torrance because

It is through the *homoousion*, or rather through the reality it stands for, that we are able to understand that what God is toward us in the condescension of his love and grace in Jesus Christ he is in his very own Being, and that the specific modes of God's self-communication to us in the incarnation of his Word in space and time as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not transient aspects of his Reality but are personal modes of being that belong to God as he eternally is in his own relations and ultimate Reality.⁵⁴³

The fact that the Incarnate Son is *homoousios* with the Father has immediate implications for how Torrance understands the mediation of revelation. Revelation is not merely the imparting of information, but rather reveals the self giving God in our midst in the incarnate Son. Torrance's argument for the divinity of Christ revolves around the oneness in being of the Son and the Father. The essential nature of the oneness between the Son and the Father in Torrance's thought is clearly evidenced when he says,

The supreme point which I wish to stress ... is the fact that the Father/Son or Son/Father relationship falls *within the very Being of God*. That is to say, the Sonship embodied in Jesus Christ belongs to the inner relations of God's own eternal Being, so that when Jesus Christ reveals God the Father to us through himself the only begotten Son, he gives us access to knowledge of God in some measure as he is in himself.⁵⁴⁴

The notion that the Son shares the same being with the Father is important to Torrance because it underscores the point that the validity of Christ's revelation and mediation lies in the being of God. Torrance contrasts our being children of God with Christ being Son of God,

Jesus Christ is Son of God in a unique sense, for he is Son of God within God, so that what he is and does as Son of the Father falls within the eternal Being of the Godhead. That is the doctrine of the Mediator, the doctrine of the

⁵⁴² Ibid., p. 125.

⁵⁴³ Torrance (ed.), *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*, p. xx.

⁵⁴⁴ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, p. 54.

incarnate Son of the Father who is of one and the same being with the Father.⁵⁴⁵

Because the Son of God is within the eternal being of the Godhead, Torrance argues that Jesus Christ is to be acknowledged as God in the same sense as the Father is acknowledged as God. As the Son and the Father are indivisible, the oneness between them provides the mandate for Torrance to claim that in the revelation and mediation of Christ human 'knowledge of God the Father and the knowledge of Jesus Christ the incarnate Son of the Father arise in us together, not one without the other.'⁵⁴⁶ To put it differently, knowledge of the Father and the Son is one indivisible movement of knowing because it is grounded in and governed by the mutual relation in being of which the Father and Son share. To Torrance the mutual relation in being is intrinsically affiliated to the mutual relation in knowing between the Father and the Son. On this note, Torrance asserts that

Our knowledge of the Father and the Son, of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Father, is mediated to us in and through Jesus Christ in such a way that in a profound sense we are given to share in the knowledge which God has of himself within himself as Father and Son or Son and Father, which is part of what is meant by our knowing God through the Spirit of God who is in him and whom he sends to us through the Son.⁵⁴⁷

Since God has revealed and mediated himself to us in himself as the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the normative centre whereby all knowledge of God's revelation is controlled.

Christ as the revealer is not a being that is one or two steps removed from God. This is God with us. The act that Christ is one with God ensures that the reality that we have among us in this space, in this time is none other than God. When Christ communicates it is a real communication from God. Torrance identifies the theological struggle that the church engages in, 'to conserve evangelical faith in the oneness between what God is toward us in Jesus Christ and what he is in his own Being as God. If that relation in being and agency is cut, then the whole Gospel of saving mediation between God and man collapses.'⁵⁴⁸ In the person of this God-man

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, p. 2.

both that he is God and that he is man must be presented and defended, because if Jesus is not God then we have no communication from God according to Torrance.

The importance of this for the understanding of baptism is whatever relation the baptised have with Christ they have that relation with God. It is also the bedrock of Torrance's Christocentric approach to theology.

4.1.2 The *Hypostatic Union*

From the *homoousion* the Christian Church goes on to speak more explicitly of Christ as he in whom divine and human nature are united in one Person, for Jesus Christ is not the union of two persons in the one common nature but the union of two natures in one Person. This was formulated in the doctrine of the hypostatic union.⁵⁴⁹

By *hypostatic union* Torrance has in mind a union of a fully divine and a fully human nature united in the one person of the incarnate Son of God. The natures are neither confounded with one another, nor separated from one another. The union is called *hypostatic* because the two natures 'are united in one hypostasis or person of the Son; it is therefore a personal union in the sense that the two natures are united in One Person and have their hypostasis or subsistence in that One Person alone.'⁵⁵⁰

This doctrine is denied or re-interpreted by liberal theologians. The opposition to the possibility of communication with God is so closely linked with the nature of Christ.⁵⁵¹ This opposition explains why Torrance goes to such length and expends such energy in defending the doctrine of the incarnation.

For Torrance all the divine and human activity of Christ flows from his one person. In the *hypostatic union* between the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ, Torrance says

Just as we think of the incarnation as God becoming man in order to become one with man and thereby to redeem man from within the depths of his human nature, so we may think of the incarnation as God the Word becoming man in order to adapt himself to man in his weakness and lack of

⁵⁴⁹ Torrance, *Outline of the Doctrine of Christ*, p. 1.

⁵⁵⁰ Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: Order and Disorder*, p. 109.

⁵⁵¹ Warfield argues that 'the doctrine of the Two Natures is only another way of stating the doctrine of the Incarnation; and the doctrine of the Incarnation is the hinge on which the Christian system turns.' B. B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), p. 211. In particular Warfield refers to the opposition of Johannes Weis who says 'that it is unthinkable that Godhood and manhood should be united in a single person walking upon the earth; that, while no doubt men of ancient time could conceive "that a man might really be an incarnate deity," modern men feel much too strongly the impassible barrier which separates the divine and the human to entertain such a notion.' Ibid.

ability and to assimilate human modes of thought and speech to himself, and thereby effect real communication between God and man and man and God.⁵⁵²

This doctrine is important to Torrance's understanding of union with Christ and union with Christ is central to his doctrine of baptism.

4.1.3 The *Anhypostatic-Enhypostatic* Couplet

Torrance utilises the doctrine of the *anhypostatic-enhypostatic* nature of Christ's humanity.⁵⁵³ This *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* couplet⁵⁵⁴ dominates Torrance's New College Lectures on the doctrine of Christ.

By *anhypostasia* classical Christology asserted that in the *assumptio carnis* the human nature of Christ had no independent *per se* subsistence apart from the event of incarnation, apart from the hypostatic union. By *enhypostasia*, however, it asserted that in the *assumptio carnis* the human nature of Christ was given a real and concrete subsistence within the hypostatic union---it was *enhypostatic* in the Word. *Anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* are inseparable. In the incarnation the eternal Son assumed human nature into oneness with Himself, but in that assumption Jesus Christ was not only real man but a man.⁵⁵⁵

Christ would not have come into being apart from the incarnation, nevertheless there is a real human in the incarnation. Torrance argues that the humanity of Christ cannot be understood properly apart from the *hypostatic union* of God and man. To Torrance the human person of Christ is not a separate person from the Word of God, but God and man in one person of Jesus Christ. What the Word of God has achieved as fully man from birth to death in the incarnation cannot be severed from the *hypostatic union*; as *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* are inseparable if understanding

⁵⁵² Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), p. 108.

⁵⁵³ 'If the Chalcedonian formulation of the doctrine of Christ is to be regarded as a theological disclosure model, the doctrine of *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* may be regarded as another cognitive instrument, a piece of theological algebra used to bring out the distinctive kind of connection latent in the economic condescension of God in and through the Incarnation, in which all of grace (pure transcendent act of God) does not mean in any way the overpowering or elimination of the human, but precisely the opposite: its affirmation and rehabilitation as such and therefore its freedom and integrity before God.', Torrance, *Outline of the Doctrine of Christ*, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁴ Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance*, p. ii.

⁵⁵⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, p. 131 fn. 1.

of the human person of Christ is to be proper. Torrance remarks that the *hypostatic union* is ‘one long act’ stretching from Bethlehem to the resurrection.⁵⁵⁶

The *anhypostatic-ehypostatic* couplet has profound implications for Torrance’s conception of Christ’s human nature.

The doctrine of *anhypostasis* and *ehypostasis* is a very careful way of stating that we cannot think of the hypostatic union statically, but must think of it on the one hand in terms of the great divine act of grace in the Incarnation and on the other hand in terms of the dynamic personal union carried through the whole life of Jesus Christ from birth to resurrection.⁵⁵⁷

Torrance sees this couplet as shaping the understanding of the *hypostatic union*.

While this doctrinal couplet emphasises two aspects of union with Christ, they must not be separated in Torrance’s theology. The *anhypostatic* nature of Jesus’ humanity taken by itself draws attention to the ontological solidarity with all humanity.

However in the emphasis given in the *ehypostatic* nature Jesus is thought of as an individual person. Hence Christ and the benefits of Christ are not automatically received by humanity. Walker approvingly refers to Calvin on this point, ‘Calvin ... said that all the parts of our salvation have been completed in Christ but that that remains of no use to us until we are brought into union with him by the Spirit through faith.’⁵⁵⁸ Torrance himself may have preferred to have put this in a more nuanced way because Walker appears to suggest two unions in Torrance’s theology. The chapter will return to this issue but Walker has drawn attention to an area of tension in Torrance’s theology that has an impact upon his doctrine of baptism.

⁵⁵⁶ ‘The crucial factor here is the meaning of ‘the human nature’ of Christ. There is no doubt at all that by ‘human nature’ the fathers wanted to stress the actuality of Christ’s union with us in our true humanity; that Christ was a man in all points like us, yet without sin. And that is right as far as it goes, for Christ was a man like ourselves, coming into and living in our mode of existence, and sharing in it to the full within a span of temporal life on earth between birth and death, and in the unity of a rational soul, and a body. But the Chalcedonian statement does not say that it was corrupt human nature taken from our fallen creation, where human nature is determined and perverted by sin, and where it is under the accusation and judgment of Holy God. But all that is essential, for the unassumed is unhealed, and it is with and within the humanity He assumed from us that the Incarnate Son is one with the Father. Therefore the hypostatic union cannot be separated from the act of assumption of our fallen human nature, from the living sanctification of our humanity, through condemnation of sin in the flesh, and through rendering from within it, perfect obedience to God. In short: if we think of Christ as assuming neutral and perfect humanity, then the doctrine of the hypostatic union may well be stated statically, but if it is our fallen humanity which He assumed, in order to heal and sanctify it, not only through the act of assumption, but through a life of obedience and a death in sacrifice, then we cannot state the doctrine of the hypostatic union statically, but must state it dynamically, in terms of the whole course of Christ’s life and obedience, from His birth to His resurrection.’ Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, p. 201.

⁵⁵⁷ Torrance, *Outline of the Doctrine of Christ*, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁸ Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, p. xliii.

To lose sight of the fact that Christ is a real man would mean that Christ as knower is less than human and therefore humanity, in Torrance's system, cannot be said to have known or heard the revelation from the revealer. Torrance outlines the problems that arise when the doctrine that Christ is fully human is lost in *The Mind of Christ in worship: The Problem of Apollinarianism in the Liturgy*.⁵⁵⁹ Torrance describes Christian worship as

properly a form of the life of Jesus Christ ascending to the Father in the life of those who are so intimately related to him through the Spirit, that when they pray to the Father through Christ, it is Christ the Incarnate Son who honours, worships and glorifies the Father in them.⁵⁶⁰

This is a vicarious response by Christ to the Father. In the same way, Christ is the vicarious knower: he knows for humanity. In Torrance's essay it is his concern that there has been a loss of the doctrine of the humanity of Christ. Apollinaris argued against the possibility of Christ having a complete human nature because that would include sin. So for Apollinaris the solution to avoid attributing sin to Christ was the proposal that 'he [Christ] took that which is without mind ... that he might himself be mind in it, and be altogether without a taste of sin both in respect of what was divine and in respect of what was mindless in the flesh.'⁵⁶¹ Torrance draws out the implications should the doctrine of the human nature of Christ be lost – there is a loss of worship and a loss of prayer. There can be no 'real' human response. Colyer describes Torrance's understanding on this point,

There can be genuine knowledge of God only when, in addition to the self-revealing of God (form in being). (1) there is a true and faithful human response, a transparency or isomorphism between God's eternal Word and creaturely rationality and human word, a transparency or isomorphism that must be generated or created (an integration of form in knowing) since it is not inherent in creaturely rationality and human word, and (2) the human mind, which is alienated from God due to sin, is reconciled and redeemed. The vicarious humanity of Christ answers both of these issues.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, pp. 139ff.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵⁶² Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, p. 103.

In this *hypostatic union* between Christ's human and divine nature, 'Torrance sees a complete union between God's uncreated rationality and Word and contingent creaturely rationality and human word so that it is mediated to all humanity.'⁵⁶³

Building on this understanding of the vicarious life of Christ, Torrance presents Christ as having vicariously fulfilled everything for humanity. The liberty that Torrance offers in his theology is that humanity in a sense has nothing to offer, or can offer nothing, to God. Christ is the vicarious human response to God. The issue that this raises is how is this applied, actualised, or realised by humanity? If humanity has no part to play then as Calvin notes, the benefits of Christ have no value as long as they remain outside of humanity.

This objective/subjective tension is key to the understanding of baptism because in baptism at least water touches humanity's skin and that takes the argument closer to the consideration of the divine human exchange. To explore this issue it is necessary to focus on Torrance's understanding of union with Christ and human participation.

4.1.4 Union with Christ and human participation

The Westminster community is indebted to Torrance for his emphasis on union with Christ. Gaffin notes the important place that union with Christ occupies in Calvin's theology but openly admits that

Subsequently, as a fair generalization, Reformed theology continued to have an appreciation of this doctrine, but at times has lost sight of its centrality and its full biblical dimensions. For instance, particularly within North American Presbyterianism from the nineteenth century to the present there has been a persisting tendency to view union with Christ as largely or even exclusively legal or representative in nature.⁵⁶⁴

Therefore there is some substance to Torrance's criticism that union with Christ has been neglected in Westminster theology. This raises a number of pertinent questions for Westminster theologians. Does Torrance's Christocentric approach serve as a challenge to consider why their theology does not have this focus? Did an overriding concern with the nature and extent of the atonement result in a loss of a Christ centred approach to theology? An examination of the literature in the last forty

⁵⁶³ Ibid., p. 104.

⁵⁶⁴ Gaffin Jr., 'Union with Christ: Some Biblical and Theological Reflections', p. 271.

years will show that this neglect is no longer the case.⁵⁶⁵ Union with Christ is increasingly becoming an important if not central theme in Westminster theology. Torrance's Christocentric commitment certainly makes union with Christ a dominant theme in his theology.⁵⁶⁶

In an essay⁵⁶⁷ given in honour of Ray Anderson, a paper that Torrance had given in 1988, he summarises his understanding of union with Christ, presents his view as consistent with Calvin's understanding and states his opposition to Westminster's view of union with Christ. Torrance notes how central the doctrine of union with Christ was in Calvin's theology. Calvin, says Torrance, stressed the fact that union with Christ came first, 'for it is only through union with Christ that we may partake of Christ and all his benefits.'⁵⁶⁸ Torrance credits Calvin with inverting the order of the medieval *ordo salutis*. The medieval notion, according to Torrance, was that union of Christ came as the result of justification and sanctification.⁵⁶⁹ Calvin inverted this, says Torrance, 'for it is only through union with Christ *first* that we may partake of all the saving benefits embodied in him: Union with Christ thus precedes justification and sanctification.'⁵⁷⁰ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, says Torrance, reverted to the medieval order. Torrance then argues that Calvin stressed the vicarious humanity of Christ.

To be united with Christ is to be joined to him in the human nature which he assumed from us and within which he took our place throughout the whole course of redemption,

⁵⁶⁵ Gaffin Jr., 'Justification and Union with Christ'; Gaffin Jr., 'Union with Christ: Some Biblical and Theological Reflections'; M. S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Garcia, *Life in Christ*; Letham, *Union with Christ*; Andrew T. B. McGowan, *The Person and Work of Christ: Understanding Jesus* (London: Paternoster, 2012); John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979); Habets repeats Torrance's criticism of Westminster without any reference or awareness of the vast volume of discussion that has taken place within Westminster theology. Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, pp. 97-126.

⁵⁶⁶ 'Baptism is usually spoken of only as the Sacrament of our incorporation into Christ, it is ultimately grounded upon the fact that in Jesus the Son of God incorporated Himself into our humanity. It is indeed only because of the union with us effected in His incarnation that we can be given to share in all that He has done in our humanity on our behalf, and so have part in His vicarious death and resurrection.', Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*, p. 117.

⁵⁶⁷ This was originally presented as The Donnell Lecture at Dubuque Theological Seminary on 6 October 1988, see footnote in Thomas. F. Torrance, 'The Distinctive Character of the Reformed Tradition,' in *Essays in Honour of Ray S. Anderson, Incarnational Ministry: The Presence of Christ in Church, Society, and Family*, eds. Christian D. Kettler & Todd H. Speidell (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1990).

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶⁹ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. 128.

⁵⁷⁰ Torrance, 'The Distinctive Character of the Reformed Tradition', p. 6.

which he fulfilled from his birth to his crucifixion and resurrection.⁵⁷¹

Torrance offers a description of the terms passive and active obedience. By Christ's active obedience Torrance means Christ taking our place in all our human activity before God the Father, not just in the keeping of God's law but in acts of faith, obedience, prayer and worship. This differs from the reformed understanding of Christ's active obedience.⁵⁷² Torrance adds that the doctrine of Christ's active obedience was rejected by the Heidelberg, Bezan and Westminster traditions of Calvinism. Torrance then presents Calvin's view of union with Christ as an ontological union,

Calvin pointed out that a union in being is involved here beyond the relation of faith. For us to *be* in Christ or for Christ to *be* in us has to be understood in an ontological way, and not in a figurative or spiritual way. It is through a real union with Christ in his vicarious humanity that all that he has done for us in himself becomes ours and we are made to share together what he is.⁵⁷³

Torrance understands that it is in this incarnational and atoning way that justification is to be understood, not just that righteousness is imputed but rather that a participation in the righteousness of Christ takes place which is transferred through union with Christ.

How Torrance related union with Christ to baptism, is important to this study, although he credits his own understanding to Calvin saying that it was in this ontological way that Calvin understood baptism.

Rankin's study on Torrance's incarnational, ontological or carnal union shows that Torrance's understanding of union with Christ is different to Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ. Rankin draws attention to the agreement that existed between

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² John Owen defines Christ's active obedience as 'First, by the obedience of the life of Christ you see what is intended, —his willing submission unto, and perfect, complete fulfilling of, every law of God, that any of the saints of God were obliged unto. It is true, every act almost of Christ's obedience, from the blood of his circumcision to the blood of his cross, was attended with suffering, so that his whole life might, in that regard, be called a death; but yet, looking upon his willingness and obedience in it, it is distinguished from his sufferings peculiarly so called, and termed his active righteousness. This is, then, I say, as was showed, that complete, absolutely perfect accomplishment of the whole law of God by Christ, our mediator; whereby he not only "did no sin, neither was there guile fold in his mouth," but also most perfectly fulfilled all righteousness, as he affirmed it became him to do. Secondly, that this obedience was performed by Christ not for himself, but for us, and in our stead.' John Owen, *Works of John Owen*, vol. 3 (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), pp. 204-205.

⁵⁷³ Torrance, 'The Distinctive Character of the Reformed Tradition', p. 7.

Vermigli and Calvin expressed in an exchange of correspondence between the two. Rankin⁵⁷⁴ summarises the exchange of letters between Vermigli and Calvin on the subject of union with Christ. Vermigli identifies a threefold union with Christ.⁵⁷⁵ The first is the union spoken about by Torrance, an incarnational union. This is a universal union embracing the whole of humanity. For Vermigli this incarnational union is a flesh and blood communication derived through parents and is ‘very general and feeble’. It is a ‘natural fellowship’ and is itself non-redemptive. It is the platform upon which God’s saving work in Christ takes place but is not independently of redemptive value.

The second union having redemptive qualities is not a universal union, not an ontological union but a spiritual union with Christ, a union which develops an increasing spiritual likeness to Christ. This spiritual union is not a universal union but for the elect when faith is ‘breathed into the elect’ resulting in the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God, renewal by the Holy Spirit and an eschatological hope of likeness and conformity to Christ.

The third union is an intermediate union which Vermigli locates between the first and second union. Calvin responds to Vermigli to express his agreement on the view of union with Christ but clarifying the third union. This third union is the fruit and effect of the second union:

For after that Christ, by the interior influence of His Spirit has bound us to Himself and united us to His Body, He exerts a second influence of His Spirit, enriching us by His gifts. Hence, that we are strong in hope and patience, that we soberly and temperately keep ourselves from worldly snares, that we strenuously bestir ourselves to the subjugation of carnal affections, that the love of righteousness and piety flourishes in us, that we are earnest in prayer, that meditation on the life to come draws us upwards, - this I maintain, flows from the second Communion, by which Christ, dwelling in us not ineffectually, brings forth the influence of His Spirit in His manifest gifts.⁵⁷⁶

Garcia refers to the three unions as ‘a strata of union, the first (incarnational or natural) fraternity-establishing in character and the latter two (mystical and spiritual)

⁵⁷⁴ Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance*.

⁵⁷⁵ It is not the intention here to discuss or debate whether this is three different unions or three aspects of the one union. They are clearly related and the way of describing union is chosen depending on the emphasis that is intended to be made.

⁵⁷⁶ Quoted in Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ*, p. 277.

effected by the Spirit for salvation.⁵⁷⁷ Torrance speaks of a ‘threefold engrafting and twofold breaking off’ in Calvin.⁵⁷⁸

The difference in the Torrance and Westminster paradigms is not in the idea of union with Christ itself but how redemption is objectively accomplished and applied (actualised) in or through that union. In both paradigms Christ has completed an objective work: both largely agree that redemption has to be applied or actualised in the believer. The questions remains: how through union with Christ does redemption become a subjective reality in the believer; and what link is there between baptismal union and the redemptive union? To begin to address these questions and the differences in the paradigms will require further investigation into Torrance’s theology.

4.1.5 Objective/Subjective tension in Torrance’s Doctrine of Baptism

Torrance accepts that a conversion must take place for a person to appropriate Christ, but how does conversion relate to baptism in Torrance’s view?

Torrance speaks of a definite conversion experience,

Unless in some real sense we share here in the life of Christ, we really cannot apprehend him; unless in some real sense what took place in the crucifixion and resurrection takes place also in analogous way in our experience, it can finally mean nothing to us.⁵⁷⁹

This is a difficult point for Torrance to make because this is about how the objective becomes subjective and Torrance exercises inordinate effort to avoid placing too much emphasis on the subjective. This subjective aspect is emphasised in John’s Gospel, according to Torrance,

The truth conveyed to us by Christ is not simply a truth embodied in his person, so that to apprehend it we must personally have an experience of Christ himself ... Only by an act of decision in obedience to the challenge of Christ can this come about.⁵⁸⁰

However this decision is a decision that Christ has already made, ‘Therefore the gospel challenges me to appropriate the decision which God has already made about

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 278.

⁵⁷⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1956), p. 102, fn. 3. In an interview with Rankin, Torrance explained this threefold engrafting as consisting of (1) Christ (in the incarnation), (2) baptism, and (3) faith, Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance*, pp. 184-5, fn. 65.

⁵⁷⁹ Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, p. 26.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

me in Christ...⁵⁸¹ The decision made by the person becomes for Torrance a decision about a decision. This nevertheless is a human decision and just moves the subjective moment. The subjective moment is just a phase removed so enabling Torrance to feel that he has reduced the subjective aspect to a minimum. Even this decision about a decision cannot be made, according to Torrance, without the aid of the Holy Spirit,

The New Testament teaching is that through the power of the Holy Spirit I am able to encounter God in Christ and through a personal decision appropriate him as my Saviour, but in such a way that my decision is an act of obedience to Christ who has already made a decision on my behalf in his obedience to God on the cross.⁵⁸²

However much Torrance has tried to reduce the subjective element there remains this evangelical emphasis of the need of a personal decision and however many phases this personal decision is removed it remains an aspect of human responsibility that is required in order to participate in Christ and his benefits. How this conversion relates to baptism is not made clear in Torrance's theology and what part this conversion has in the life of an infant that has been baptised remains a dilemma for Torrance's theology as it does for Westminster theology.

There is only one place where Torrance discusses baptism in relation to the infant and that is in the Church of Scotland's Commission on Baptism. Several comments are made. The New Testament takes it for granted that infants are to be initiated into the New Covenant as they were into the Old. The report⁵⁸³ argues in connection with household baptism that if the New Testament had meant to exclude infants from Christ's baptism, it would have used language at these points to make this quite clear. Torrance says that the whole of the early church was unanimous about infant baptism for centuries. Other scholars have not felt able to express the same degree of certainty.⁵⁸⁴ Torrance dismisses the idea of believers' baptism exclusive of infants as entirely modern, bound up with the Renaissance idea of human individualism and autonomy. This gives no account of the discipleship baptism so evident in the New Testament.⁵⁸⁵ This statement seems driven by an agenda to make infant baptism the

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid, p. 27.

⁵⁸³ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1955).

⁵⁸⁴ Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*; Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism: A Further Study in Reply to Kurt Aland*; Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?*

⁵⁸⁵ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1955).

primary baptism, which is something that Torrance has in common with much of the Westminster tradition.

From Torrance's understanding of union with Christ and human participation in Christ it can be seen that his doctrine of union with Christ is different to the Westminster doctrine of union with Christ and that the doctrine of human participation has in common some questions that both traditions need to address.

To identify further the difference in Torrance's paradigm and the distinct voice that Torrance has, attention will be given to three areas of Torrance's theology:

- His use of Irenaeus and Athanasius,
- His revision of a church manual,
- His criticism of Westminster theology.

4.2 Establishing Torrance's Distinctive Voice

Torrance's voice does need to be heard on the subject of baptism. There are a number of reasons why his voice is not heard. Torrance is complicated to read, he is repetitive, constantly teaching his whole theological architectonic paradigm on every topic. Torrance paints his theology with such 'broad brush strokes', whether he is dealing with the early church fathers, Calvin, scientists or simply opposing all forms of dualisms. Torrance is short on detail and much of the detail of Torrance's theology will have to be worked out by those who follow him. It will not serve the church well for Torrance's followers and Westminster theologians to ignore him on baptism. Torrance has a unique voice on baptism. When that voice is not fully appreciated, Torrance can easily be misunderstood. The unique nature of Torrance's voice on baptism is not easily detected because of Torrance's own attempts to disguise it. For example, consider how Torrance makes use of Irenaeus and Athanasius in the development of his doctrine of baptism. The seeds of some of Torrance's ideas can be found in Irenaeus and Athanasius, but as Torrance develops these ideas into the full expression of his own theology, the reader can easily conclude that the full idea can be found in both church fathers. Torrance creatively uses their ideas but writes in a way that makes it difficult to discern between exposition and development. In order to establish Torrance's own message it is important to understand the way that he uses these two authors. The need is to strip away the disguise and reveal Torrance's own innovation. Only when there is agreement on the level of Torrance's indebtedness to the early church fathers and the

degree to which he has developed their ideas, will Torrance be heard on baptism enabling his theology to be carried forward.

The objective here is to show that Torrance's creative mind uses ideas and themes found by him in the early church fathers to launch his own novel paradigm of incarnational redemption. Two of the early church fathers quoted extensively by Torrance are Irenaeus and Athanasius, in the context of his discussion of baptism in particular.

The consideration of Torrance's use of Irenaeus' doctrine of baptism is compared with Ferguson's⁵⁸⁶ description of Irenaeus and this identifies that Irenaeus is not saying all that Torrance is saying on the doctrine of baptism. Torrance's use of Athanasius, particularly in *The Trinitarian Faith*, has received the attention of a number of critics. The purpose in the consideration of the two church fathers is to raise the question about the possibility that Torrance is anachronistically reading his twentieth century innovative understanding of theology into ancient texts.

A further area providing useful information on Torrance's distinctive voice is in his involvement in editing liturgies and a *Manual of Church Doctrine*. Torrance was involved in the Church Service Society. This society was established in 1865 to restore to the Church of Scotland some order to their services of worship. The members of the society sought to recover the importance of the eucharist in the service as it had become marginalised in a service that was largely dominated by a lengthy wordy sermon. With this in mind, Torrance contributed to a number of liturgical revisions which will be considered later in the chapter. However, one very clear example where Torrance's distinctive voice and message can be seen and heard is in a comparison of his edited version of *A Manual of Church Doctrine* by Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick with the original. Again the purpose for examining Torrance's revision of the *Manual of Church Doctrine* is to discover the distinctive Torrance and to note that Torrance is promoting and teaching his own novel soteriological paradigm.

A further area where the distinctive Torrance can be seen is in the clash of the two paradigms as he raises ten objections to Westminster's baptismal theology in his work on the Special Commission on Baptism.⁵⁸⁷ This section will not lead to the conclusion that either of these paradigms have been defeated by the other but rather

⁵⁸⁶ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*.

⁵⁸⁷ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1960).

that careful listening to each other could serve to develop a richer doctrine of baptism. Westminster theology cannot defend itself against the charges of preoccupation with certain doctrines and the neglect of major doctrines that have been put to it by Torrance. In the end Westminster may not embrace Torrance's paradigm but it can learn from his emphasis on the meaning of baptism and his criticisms of their theology. Some of Torrance's criticisms of Westminster theology will be rejected on the grounds that the basis of his objection to Westminster theology is that they are not consistent with his paradigm. This may simply mean that Torrance's question is not a legitimate question to put to the Westminster theological paradigm.

However not only must the voice of Torrance be clear but so must the voice of Westminster theology be clear and in order to promote a developing dialogue it is necessary to examine to what extent the representation of Westminster theology is accurate in Torrance's writings. Does Torrance choose the best of Westminster theology, does he acknowledge the different schools of thought within Westminster, or does he to some degree criticise a caricature of Westminster theology?

In identifying Torrance's voice, the paradigmatic nature of his theology can be recognised. It can lead to confusion if it is imagined that Torrance's theology is merely a minor modification of Westminster theology. Also the voice of Westminster theology that is made clear here is one that is chastened by Torrance, but one that appeals for it to be acknowledged, where it has responded, and further that there is a better voice in Westminster theology to listen to than the one Torrance has presented, and indeed a voice that might share much in common with Torrance. Establishing these points can help 'chart' the way through the waters of baptism.

4.2. 1 Torrance's use of Irenaeus and Athanasius

In his development of his doctrine of baptism Torrance appeals to the early church fathers to establish patristic roots for his incarnational soteriology. In association with his doctrine of baptism Torrance pays particular credit to Irenaeus and Athanasius, so comment will be limited here to these two church fathers. Torrance held Irenaeus in high esteem acknowledging him to be the first great biblical theologian of the Church after the apostles.⁵⁸⁸ Specifically regarding baptism Torrance says that 'No finer teaching on baptism is to be found in the whole of the

⁵⁸⁸ Church of Scotland, *Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 13.

early Church than that which has come down to us from Irenaeus.⁵⁸⁹ Torrance says that Irenaeus held a doctrine of baptism based on not just the writings of Paul but importantly also the writings of John. Taking into consideration the writings of John and the book of Hebrews enabled Irenaeus, argues Torrance, to emphasis respectively the incarnation and the atoning obedience of Christ. Irenaeus is said by Torrance to have opposed the dualism of separating the Creator from the Redeemer, body from spirit, and water baptism from Spirit baptism. Torrance develops what Irenaeus teaches and says ‘The Word of God, by whom all things were created and by whom man was made under the breath of God, had Himself become flesh, and so in the Incarnate Word our estranged humanity had been healed and restored to union and communion with God.’⁵⁹⁰ Torrance says that Irenaeus viewed baptism

- as the Sacrament of the incarnational reversal of the lost estate we have in Adam,⁵⁹¹
- as the objective reality already accomplished for us in Christ alone.

Remarkably Torrance says that the distinctive contribution of Irenaeus is that

following St John, he stresses in Baptism the aspect of new birth in likeness to the birth of Christ. In Baptism the Word made flesh of the Virgin Mary bestows upon us His Spirit and we are born again unto God, but only because we have already been born again in the birth of Christ which he underwent on our behalf.⁵⁹²

In his survey of baptism in the early church Ferguson devotes a chapter to Irenaeus’s views of baptism and discusses his comments on the baptism of Jesus and his opposition to the Gnostics’ view of baptism as part of two further chapters. The salient features of Irenaeus’ doctrine of baptism drawn attention to by Ferguson are:

- the period of preparation before baptism,
- the need of faith for salvation,
- the confession of such faith at baptism,
- the administration of baptism using the trinitarian formula,
- the association of baptism with the remission of sins and rebirth,
- that baptism was likely to be by immersion,

⁵⁸⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 94.

⁵⁹⁰ Church of Scotland, *Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 13.

⁵⁹¹ This is repeated by George Hunsinger and attributed to Irenaeus in Hunsinger, ‘The Dimension of Depth’, p. 145.

⁵⁹² Church of Scotland, *Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 14.

- that baptism was into Christ,
- the Holy Spirit is given in baptism,
- baptism is an act in which both the water and the Spirit are at work,
- the water cleanses the body and the Spirit cleanses the soul,
- the baptised cannot be made one with Christ without the Holy Spirit,
- the body receives unity through the water and the soul receives unity through the Spirit,
- the washing of the body and the purifying of the soul while distinguishable in principle are not separable in fact,
- the water and the Spirit worked together in one baptismal event,
- there is a parallel between Old Testament circumcision of the flesh and Christian circumcision by the Spirit,
- and that circumcision was not used as an analogy for baptism.⁵⁹³

With regard to the virgin birth as it relates to regeneration, Ferguson says that for Irenaeus regeneration was a broader category than the baptism related to it. Here Ferguson is referring to Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 4.33.11 and paraphrasing Irenaeus, Ferguson says ‘Jesus’ virgin birth regenerates [regenerat] people to God.’⁵⁹⁴ Again quoting Irenaeus, Ferguson says that the generation that produces death is escaped by the regeneration which is from the virgin by faith. In a footnote Ferguson adds a comment about the uncertainty of what is meant by Irenaeus, he says ‘The reference to the virgin is presumably to Mary and the virgin birth of Jesus, but possibly the church.’⁵⁹⁵

In the final few paragraphs Ferguson seeks to tone down any speculation that Irenaeus can be used to support infant baptism. Commenting on the use of the various words used by Irenaeus for regeneration Ferguson says, ‘Besides its reference to baptism, regeneration is used by Irenaeus for Jesus’ work of renewal and rejuvenation effected by his birth and resurrection without any reference to baptism.’⁵⁹⁶

Ferguson’s account of Irenaeus’ doctrine of baptism is quite different to Torrance’s account. The points made by Irenaeus about the incarnation and the virgin birth lend themselves as signposts to point in the direction of Torrance’s

⁵⁹³ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History*, pp. 303-308.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

theology. However Torrance would appear to be developing Irenaeus' doctrine of baptism. Torrance is correct in finding the seeds for his ideas in Irenaeus but for Torrance not to appear to be giving a mere rehearsal of Irenaeus, Torrance's distinctive voice has to be extracted and acknowledged.

While Torrance holds high praise for Irenaeus it is the later church father Athanasius who proved to be his favourite.⁵⁹⁷ Consideration here will not deal with the detail of Torrance's use of Athanasius but rather the reaction of others to how accurate Torrance is in his description of Athanasius. Since Torrance's use of Athanasius has received more attention the contribution of the critics serves to reinforce the point that is being made here, that is, for the need to identify the distinctive voice of Torrance.

Rankin suggests that there are three views on whether Athanasius believed that Christ had a human soul. The majority view, according to Rankin, sees in Athanasius no place for the soul of Christ in his consideration of the person of Christ or the plan of salvation. The second position championed by J.N.D. Kelly is more of a cautious neutral view.⁵⁹⁸ The third view is the one adopted by Torrance. It is that Athanasius believed that Christ takes unto himself the full humanity so that he might offer humanity to God and to do this requires an active soul. Rankin makes three important points about Torrance's use of Athanasius. The first is that Torrance quotes from some works that have been attributed to Athanasius but of which the authorship has been questioned. Second, when reading Torrance on Athanasius the reader would not be aware that there was any debate among patristic scholars about Athanasius, his corpus, or his theology. Third, Rankin in an extended appendix to his thesis examines similarities between Torrance and Melville Scott (published 1914) in their understanding of Athanasius.

A number of reviewers of Torrance's work, including both his theological opponents and friends, note the way that Torrance handles the early church fathers. A number of critics refer to extensive mention of the early fathers but note a paucity of references or quotes. One critic says 'What is remarkable about Torrance is ... his

⁵⁹⁷ Matthew Baker, 'The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance,' *Participatio: Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 2 (2010), p. 5.

⁵⁹⁸ See Rankin for a more detailed discussion, Rankin, *Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance*, pp. 146ff.

scanty documentation.⁵⁹⁹ Morrison says, 'This may be overstated, but it seems that Athanasius becomes an occasion, something of a mouthpiece for a particular view of God and the world that may not be fully his own.'⁶⁰⁰ Muller says of Torrance that 'He creates an Athanasius who did not really exist in order to give Barthianism some historical foundation – and the western tradition, which is perhaps better known and therefore not so easily bent, he sets aside as a heresy.'⁶⁰¹ Molnar seems to understate the matter, 'While there are some who might find occasional historical inaccuracies in Torrance's appraisal of Athanasius, much of what Torrance presents is carefully researched and accurately presented.'⁶⁰² In particular Molnar describes Muller's criticism of Torrance as extreme. Muller says that 'Torrance's identification of the Barth legacy is, then, a genuine Barthianism at the same time that it is a massive misrepresentation of the history of the church and an egregious falsification of our theological heritage.'⁶⁰³ It is not that Muller is a lone voice. Webster in a review of Torrance's presentation of Athanasius in *The Trinitarian Faith* says

... despite the massive number of references to patristic authors, there are very few quotations in the book. Torrance tends to proceed (as in other works) by paraphrase, leaving the reader unable to judge the appropriateness of his exposition without exhaustive work on the primary texts. Given the very strong convictions which Torrance brings to the material, this is especially regrettable.⁶⁰⁴

David Scott says that Torrance's stress in *The Trinitarian Faith* that God alone can make God known 'is due more to Karl Barth's influence in modern theology than patristic writers' beliefs.'⁶⁰⁵ Webster commends Torrance's work and describes it as an exhilarating read but then goes on to caution the reader, 'readers should beware of generalization, over-confident assertion, and an historical attitude which borders on

⁵⁹⁹ Sebastian Rehnman, 'Barthian Epigoni: Thomas F. Torrance's Barth Reception,' *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998), p. 280.

⁶⁰⁰ John Douglas Morrison, 'Book Review: The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church by Thomas F. Torrance,' *Calvin's Theological Journal* 25(1990). See also John Douglas Morrison, 'Review Article of the Trinitarian Faith,' *The Evangelical Theological Society*, (1992).

⁶⁰¹ Richard A. Muller, 'The Barth Legacy: New Athanasius or Origen Redivivus? Response to T. F. Torrance,' *Thomist* 54.4(1990), p. 700.

⁶⁰² Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, p. 326.

⁶⁰³ Muller, 'The Barth Legacy', p. 684.

⁶⁰⁴ J. Webster, 'Book Review: The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church by Thomas F. Torrance,' *Themelios* 16 (1990).

⁶⁰⁵ David A. Scott, 'Book Review: The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church, by Thomas F. Torrance,' *Anglican Theological Review* (1991).

the cavalier.⁶⁰⁶ Friend and expositor of the Torrance Theology, Elmer Colyer says that

Torrance readers cannot but feel a little cautious about his interpretations of a variety of theologians in the history of the church when those interpretations seem to closely approximate Torrance's own position; however, this is in large measure due to the creative dialectic Torrance employs between historical investigation and his own constructive perspective...⁶⁰⁷

It is not possible to be certain what Torrance's motive is in trying to recast history, but it presents a barrier in identifying his own unique theological paradigm. Torrance uses key ideas that he finds in the early church fathers to launch his creative development of his own theology which is influenced more by Barth than by the early church fathers. The understanding of Torrance's distinctive theology could be improved by identifying the roots of his ideas that he finds in the early church fathers. Torrance has done a great service for the church by taking it back to the early church especially to recover the emphases that the church has lost. However a modest revision of how Torrance developed his theology from certain key ideas found in Irenaeus and Athanasius would lead to clarity in the presentation of the Torrance paradigm.

4.2.2 Torrance's Revision of Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick: Manual of Church Doctrine

Torrance's revision of Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick is a very clear example of how Torrance's theology differs from the theology of Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick. In Appendix Two the original *Manual of Church Doctrine* and the edited version have been placed in parallel columns so that the extent of the editing can be seen. Torrance clearly changes the meaning of Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick to reflect his own theology. Torrance adds almost fifty percent in word count to the original church manual in his revisions. There is approximately twenty seven percent added to the main body of the text and the footnotes are almost two and half times greater, made up of both new footnotes and extended footnotes. By far the greatest change is in Chapter Four relating to the ministry of the church. The first two chapters have been extended by almost equal amounts. Chapter two has been given an additional section on the sacraments of the Old Testament.

⁶⁰⁶ Webster, 'Book Review: The Trinitarian Faith'.

⁶⁰⁷ Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, p. 20, fn. 13.

While a detailed analysis needs to be carried out on Torrance's revision the main changes which Torrance makes that are important for the consideration of his doctrine of baptism are:

- Torrance adds stress on the incarnation which was not in the original document,
- References to the passion of Christ are edited to include the life of Christ,
- Wotherspoon refers to grace as given, Torrance changes this to Christ,
- Torrance adds emphasis on the vicarious nature of Christ's work,
- Where Wotherspoon has spoken of the ordinances of Christ as channels of grace, Torrance has removed this and refers to the ordinances of Christ as effective means of grace and that through them Christ himself comes.

The changes made by Torrance significantly revise what Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick had intended to say. This revision by Torrance helps identify the areas where his theology is different to what had traditionally been accepted.

This work is part of a wider involvement that Torrance had with the liturgy of the Church of Scotland. Torrance was an honorary president of the Church Service Society. The Church Service Society was founded in 1865 and according to Loudon has been the main organised influence which has transformed the worship and liturgy of the Church of Scotland.⁶⁰⁸ Commenting on Loudon's survey of eucharistic practice in the Church of Scotland Torrance says, 'It is unfortunate that our Scottish rite is governed still by the Latin and Western tradition in the celebration of the Eucharist which terminates with the communion in the body and blood of Christ, whereas the ancient tradition of the Church, especially in the East, preserves the essential place of the resurrection in the Eucharistic pascha.'⁶⁰⁹ Torrance also refers in his response to Loudon about his own involvement in the preparation of the 1962 *Ordinal and Service Book*, where he sought to restore the focus on the eschatological aspect of the eucharist. Revision also involved, says Torrance, a greater emphasis on the resurrection, ascension, and heavenly mission of the enthroned Lamb.⁶¹⁰

In chapter One the liturgical movement was referred to as one of the factors that influenced Torrance's doctrine of baptism. Torrance never really embraced the idea that there was an efficacy in the liturgy but used the revision of liturgy to reflect his

⁶⁰⁸ R. Stuart Loudon, 'Eucharistic Practice in the Church of Scotland Today.' in *Record*, The Church Service Society, Issue No. 5, 1983, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18

theological paradigm. It is Torrance's revision of liturgy that his distinctive theology can be found. Commenting on the liturgical renewal movement Torrance appreciated the restoration of the eucharist to its proper place, evident through the republishing of *Knox's Book of Common Order* in 1840. However Torrance also notes that the spate of service books ensuing in the wake of the renewal movement could not escape the idea of inward grace channelled through the sacraments.⁶¹¹

Torrance saw his eucharistic theology as a bridge between the East and West and he saw himself as influenced more by the Eastern Church fathers. However, in research assessing Torrance's eucharistic theology Stamps says, 'What in fact he (Torrance) appears to have done is to have found an Eastern source for what is generally acknowledged as a Western notion of the Trinity.'⁶¹² Stamps goes on to identify other areas in his theology where Torrance is different to the Eastern theologians. Torrance's view of the liturgy and the church's worship is that it is merely an echo of Christ's prayer where Christ as priest in heaven vicariously worships.⁶¹³ This, says Stamps, would not pass for genuine participation of the earthly liturgy in that of heaven in the Eastern understanding. The Torrance voice is a western voice with Eastern influences. His involvement in liturgical renewal is limited to having the liturgy reflect his incarnational theology.

4.2.3 Torrance's Criticism of Westminster's Baptismal Theology

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to explore Torrance's criticism of Westminster's baptismal theology. In the Special Commission on Baptism Torrance makes ten particular criticisms of Westminster's baptismal theology. These will each be addressed in this section. Supplementing what Torrance has said in the Special Commission will be the material that he includes in the chapter on the Westminster tradition found in his *Scottish Theology*⁶¹⁴ and in his *School of Faith*.⁶¹⁵

Torrance contends that there is a strand of Calvinism which he calls 'Evangelical Calvinism', now taken up by others,⁶¹⁶ which is more faithful to Calvin, Knox and the older Scottish tradition and that the Westminster tradition has departed from this

⁶¹¹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1959), p. 5.

⁶¹² Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh*, p. 255.

⁶¹³ Thomas F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry*, Second Edition (London: T&T Clark, 1993).

⁶¹⁴ Quite similar comments and criticisms of the Westminster Confession are made by T. F. Torrance's brother James Torrance in James B. Torrance, 'Strength and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology,' in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1982 reprinted 1986).

⁶¹⁵ Torrance, *The School of Faith*.

⁶¹⁶ Habets and Grow, (eds) *Evangelical Calvinism*.

older tradition into a moralistic and legalistic religion based upon a law focused federal theology. Westminster theology is greatly indebted to Torrance because of his emphasis upon the incarnation, the trinity, union with Christ, the two natures of Christ and his work on the sacraments. Westminster theologians need to acknowledge the extent to which Torrance is correct in highlighting the areas of theology that have been neglected in their tradition. Westminster needs to ask of itself why these areas have been neglected. While many Westminster theologians are turning back to Calvin and drawing heavily from Calvin in their discussion of the trinity, union with Christ, the incarnation and the real presence of Christ in the sacraments, there has to be an acknowledgement of the role that Torrance has played in signposting back to Calvin in these neglected areas. Much could be gained by followers of Torrance and those from the Westminster tradition entering into dialogue,⁶¹⁷ but to use one of Torrance's phrases there needs to be a 'ground clearing' so that both parties fairly represent the theology of the other. Torrance and Westminster will never be in full agreement because they operate with two entirely different paradigms of soteriology, but many of the broader points and emphases found in Torrance have been taken up by theologians in the Westminster tradition. Entering into dialogue is helpful because it serves the useful purpose of forcing a tradition to formulate appropriate responses to criticism. In the context of this thesis Torrance's objective baptism and his explanation of the efficacy of baptism can be usefully employed to address some of the weaknesses in Westminster's doctrine of baptism and to place the focus back on the meaning of baptism. This section will respond to the criticisms that Torrance has made of Westminster's baptismal theology because if the Westminster theology does not speak with a clear voice the more difficult it will be for the Torrance tradition and the Westminster tradition to learn from each other.

In his criticism of the Westminster tradition, Torrance objects to what he believes is the imposition of 'federal theology' upon the reformed teaching of John Calvin.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid. This is a helpful book which promises the beginning of a dialogue. In the second chapter Partee identifies three strands of Calvinism, Conservative, Liberal and Evangelical. Using Partee's taxonomy, he would likely suggest that it is from the conservative perspective that this thesis is looking at the evangelical Calvinistic views of Torrance. However within this broad Conservative Calvinism to use Partee's category there is what has been called an experimental Calvinism, that would stress union with Christ, that would not support the rationalistic tone seen in Charles Hodge and that appreciates the work that Torrance has done on the *homoousian* and the trinity. This group has agreed with the dangers of the stress on individualism and the importance of a reformed ecclesiology. A number from this tradition have supported Nevin in his debate with Hodge on the Lord's Supper. So the lines drawn by Partee are not as clear as stated in this nevertheless helpful chapter.

Torrance, in fact, identifies a ‘new paradigm’; though he does not use that term; instead he speaks of the imposition of a new ‘framework of law and grace governed by a severely contractual notion of covenant.’⁶¹⁸ Torrance believed that it was the imposition of this framework that produced the many problems with Westminster theology giving a dominant role to the doctrines of predestination and the extent of the atonement. This in turn gave rise to some practical pastoral difficulties regarding the assurance of salvation and whether a ‘free offer of Christ in the Gospel’ was possible to all. Torrance accuses Westminster of being focused upon an individual’s salvation leading to a neglect of the doctrine of the trinity and of a trinitarian understanding of redemption and worship.

Torrance describes the theology of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* as the product of hard-line Calvinists and protestant scholasticism, a rationalist, moralising, legalistic document lacking the joy, the evangelical tone and freshness of the older tradition. Torrance’s criticism of Westminster’s baptismal theology will be dealt with under ten headings, where each heading, while not a heading that Torrance has given, represents the criticisms that Torrance has made in the Special Commission on Baptism.⁶¹⁹

1. Sacramental theology,
2. Baptism as a means of grace,
3. Sacramental dualism,
4. Loss of meaning of baptism,
5. Covenant theology,
6. Union with Christ,
7. Federal theology,
8. Atonement,
9. Election,
10. The Incarnation.

1. Sacramental Theology

The issue that Torrance objects to in Westminster’s sacramental theology is the development of a fixed notion of what a sacrament is and then forcing both baptism and the Lord’s Supper into that grid. Torrance notes that the New Testament never speaks of the sacraments in general but only of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

⁶¹⁸ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. x.

⁶¹⁹ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report on the Special Commission on Baptism* May 1960, pp. 4-5.

Agreement with this approach can be found in Bavinck who acknowledges that the Scriptures do not have a general doctrine of the sacraments. Bavinck also notes that the Scriptures speak of circumcision and Passover, of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but does not sum up these ordinances under a single term.⁶²⁰ However after Bavinck notes this he proceeds in traditional fashion to consider the sacraments in a general way before proceeding to deal specifically with the two New Testament sacraments.

Torrance makes a valid point in objecting to the danger of constructing a general doctrine of the sacraments. The general doctrine of the sacraments normally begins with a definition of a sacrament which is usually some variation of Augustine's idea of an external sign of an invisible or internal grace. That definition normally sets the trajectory for the discussion. Torrance does not want the conversation to begin there because of the danger of it being separated from Christ and the meaning of baptism. When the conversation begins with baptism and the Lord's Supper it is more likely that it will be linked with Christ and the meaning of the sacraments does not become isolated from Christ. Torrance's doctrine of baptism does place the emphasis upon Christ and seeks to draw out the meaning of baptism. This raises a question for Westminster theology: why have the contours of the typical discussion on baptism placed the emphasis away from Christ and the meaning of baptism?

Developing a general doctrine of the sacraments is a traditional approach in a reformed systematic theology. Berkouwer in his multi-volume systematic theology has a separate work on the sacraments. He notes the objection to dealing with the sacraments first, saying 'Many have objected to this order as being scholastic, since it allegedly begins by defining a general essence of the sacraments and then fills this essence with content through the doctrines of baptism and the Lord's Supper.'⁶²¹ Berkouwer goes on to deal with questions related to the sacraments in general before proceeding with the two sacraments in particular but he notes his methodology, 'We do not seek to analyse the essence of "the sacraments" prior to a consideration of the individual sacraments, for the nature of the sacraments turns precisely upon the concrete givenness of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the historical revelation in Jesus Christ.'⁶²² Horton also warns of the debates over the sacraments in general becoming mired in metaphysical speculations. Horton's point of departure for the

⁶²⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 464.

⁶²¹ G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Sacraments* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 9.

⁶²² Ibid.

sacraments is not Augustine's definition but the covenant of grace 'as the context within which the sacraments emerge in the first place.'⁶²³

The history of how baptism within the instrumental category has strayed from focusing on the meaning of baptism and the fact that systematic theologians warn of the danger of beginning with a general treatment of the sacraments all adds credence to Torrance's concern. Divorcing the sacraments from the person and work of Christ is a very real danger and therefore Torrance sounds a valid warning.

2. Baptism as a means of grace

Torrance's objection to baptism being described as a means of grace is that Westminster theology speaks of baptism as a means of grace and therefore casts a structure of

means and ends, where a result is to be achieved or an end attained. This implies a notion of 'grace' as something that can be administered, and of Baptism as an institutional means of its administration. The New Testament, however, never relates Baptism to grace, and never thinks of grace or Baptism in terms of 'means'.⁶²⁴

In Westminster theology the question 'what is grace' is not always addressed.⁶²⁵ The question arises here because of Torrance's particular theology. Following Barth, Torrance asserts that the Being of God and the Act of God are identical. Torrance develops this so that revelation and grace are identical to the Being of God.

Grace is to be understood as the impartation not just of something from God but of God Himself. In Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit God freely gives to us in such a way that the Gift and the Giver are one and the same in the wholeness and indivisibility of His grace...⁶²⁶

This is a fundamental difference between Torrance and Westminster. Muller says,

the theology of the Reformation recognized not only that God is distinct from his revelation and that the one who reveals cannot be fully comprehended in the revelation and that revelation, given in a finite and understandable form, must truly rest on the eternal truth of God: this is the

⁶²³ Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 777.

⁶²⁴ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* May 1960, p. 4.

⁶²⁵ Muller notes that 'Although the Reformers held firmly to a doctrine of salvation by grace alone, virtually none of them wrote a separate treatise on grace.' Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725 - the Divine Essence and Attributes*, 4 vols., vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 570.

⁶²⁶ Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology*, pp. 14-15.

fundamental message and intention of the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology.⁶²⁷

Torrance's consistent response to this objection is that Westminster is guilty of a false dualism, driving a wedge between God and his revelation. The discussion never gets past this point. However this is a dogmatic innovation by Barth and adopted by Torrance.⁶²⁸ As this dogma is worked through Torrance's doctrine of salvation it gives rise to a major difference with Westminster teaching on salvation and baptism. A further difficulty for discussion arises because the veracity of any Westminster teaching is constantly tested in its compliance with Torrance's presupposition. Westminster will always fail this test because it is not ever attempting to comply with it.

In Westminster theology grace is not a created grace⁶²⁹ but is viewed both within the economy of salvation and in the doctrine of God. Calvin identifies grace as the unmerited or undeserved goodness of God⁶³⁰ and criticises certain understandings of grace that views it as 'nothing else but a quality infused into the hearts of men: for grace, properly speaking, is in God; and what is in us is the effect of grace.'⁶³¹

Muller says that

Divine Grace, as indicated both in the doctrine of the divine attributes and in the developing Reformed covenant theology of the seventeenth century, is not merely the outward favour of God toward the elect, evident only in the post-lapsarian dispensation of salvation; rather it is one of the perfections of the divine nature.⁶³²

The blessings of grace in Jesus Christ and his benefits can be communicated through baptism by the Holy Spirit in the Westminster view. In Torrance's view what is communicated is Christ himself because he is identical to grace in the Torrance doctrine.

⁶²⁷ Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 1, p. 229.

⁶²⁸ Muller, commenting on Barth, notes that 'the presuppositions underlying the argument of the essay on 'Revelation' are not made clear in the essay itself; Barth simply takes it for granted that God can be identified with or reduced to his revelation and that revelation can be equated with grace.' Muller, 'The Barth Legacy', p. 676.

⁶²⁹ Torrance quite frequently criticises the Roman Catholic Church for its idea of created grace.

⁶³⁰ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Trans. Rev William Pringle, 22 vols., vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), Isaiah 14:2, p. 435.

⁶³¹ John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans and Thessalonians*, Trans. R. Mackenzie, A New Translation, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), Romans 5:5, p. 107.

⁶³² Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 3, p. 570.

This leads to a second question – ‘Is grace conferred at the time of baptism.’ The question is the same for both, except that grace means something different in each case.

This question touches on the difficult area of the application of salvation and the function served by baptism. This is an area that has caused great confusion and it is difficult for this view of baptism to provide an answer because it is neither baptismal regeneration nor symbolism. Both Torrance and Westminster in explaining what baptism is, describe it in ways that would not seem out of place as a description of baptismal regeneration, although both are careful to deny both baptismal regeneration and a symbolical view of baptism. Torrance would not use the phrase ‘grace conferred’ because of its association with something that is separated from Christ, but for Torrance, where grace is Christ, it would appear that through baptism the person is truly made one with Christ. ‘For us, baptism means that we become one with him, sharing in his righteousness, and that we are sanctified in him as members of the messianic people of God, compacted together in one Body in Christ.’⁶³³ But the problem is the same here for Torrance and Westminster. If the word ‘conferred’ is retained, or the verb is changed or nuanced, some verb that captures the idea of connecting the person with the salvation that Christ has accomplished is required.

The Westminster Confession of Faith states that ‘The effectiveness of baptism is not tied to that moment of time in which it is administered.’⁶³⁴ The only comment from Torrance appearing to have this time element is in the context of referring to an anonymous third century document on baptism. It is difficult to know whether Torrance is quoting, interpreting or developing, but he says, ‘The baptism of the Spirit may precede or follow baptism with water, but the focal point of both is the invocation of the Name of Christ, for it is in him that they are inseparably joined together, as is made clear in the baptism of Jesus himself at the river Jordan ...’⁶³⁵ This matter of timing is possibly the most difficult question that the instrumental category of baptism has to face. The issue of whether the difference in timing between the baptism of the Spirit and the baptism with water sits consistently with everything that has been said about the meaning of baptism leads to a question about the efficacy of baptism.

⁶³³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 87.

⁶³⁴ Ward, *The Westminster Confession and Catechisms in Modern English*, 28.6.

⁶³⁵ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 91.

This efficacy of baptism is equally as difficult as the previous because neither Torrance nor Westminster attribute any saving efficacy to the rite itself.⁶³⁶ Torrance proposes that the efficacy of baptism resides in Christ. The strength of this view is that it presents an objective view of baptism. However the problem arises with the person who is baptised as an infant, but then in later life rejects the Christian faith. Torrance's doctrine of union with Christ logically lends itself to universalism. It is difficult to see how Torrance can avoid this, but Torrance denies that he is a universalist.⁶³⁷ This leaves a problem for Torrance's view to explain why the baptism in some cases is not efficacious. Torrance sees this as mysterious as the problem of evil. So it becomes an enigma that need not be faced or deliberated upon for any further engagement.

Westminster theologians do not always discuss the efficacy of baptism⁶³⁸ but a number have. Fesko says that 'the efficacy of baptism lies not in the water but in what the water points to: the promise of God.'⁶³⁹ The efficacy issue goes back to timing and is related to the Sovereign will of God.⁶⁴⁰ The person who is baptised is not necessarily regenerated. The person may have been regenerated before, at the time or sometime after or perhaps never. God is not tied to a mechanical view of the sacraments. Baptism is efficacious for the one saved by God at a time of God's appointment. It is useful to refer to Calvin here as he makes a distinction between God's offer of saving grace in the sacraments and the reception of the offer,⁶⁴¹ and that the sacraments are efficacious only as the grace they offer is received by faith.⁶⁴² This distinction allows Calvin to explain how some receive the saving efficacy of baptism long after the baptism takes place, and why some never receive the grace at

⁶³⁶ Within Presbyterianism especially in USA a movement called *Federal Vision* advocate a form of covenantal baptismal regeneration. For example see Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Pleb: A theology of Baptism*.

⁶³⁷ Torrance views universalism as a heresy so while it is difficult to see how his view avoids it, it has to be accepted that Torrance used the strongest of language to reject this.

⁶³⁸ Speaking of the Westminster divines, Fesko says that 'the extant records on the debates over baptismal efficacy are a bit sparse and even somewhat cryptic.' Fesko, *Word, Water and Spirit*, p. 135.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.87.

⁶⁴⁰ 'The powerful grace of God is not confined to the sign; and God may, if He pleases, freely bestow it without the aid of the sign. Besides, many receive the sign who are not partakers of grace; for the sign is common to all, to the good and to the bad alike; but the Spirit is bestowed only on the elect, and the sign, as we have said, has no efficacy without the Spirit.' John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. T.H.L. Parker, *A New Translation*, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), Ephesians 5:26, p. 205.

⁶⁴¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.16.

⁶⁴² John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas Myers, 22 vols., vol. XII (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), Ezekiel 20:20, p. 311

all. In other words the grace that is objectively offered must be received by faith for baptism to be efficacious. Evans refers to this as ‘latent efficacy’.⁶⁴³

3. Sacramental dualism

Torrance is concerned with the imposition of the Augustinian definition of a sacrament and of the introduction of a dangerous dualism. Torrance notes about Westminster theologians that

They speak of a sacrament as an outward and sensible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, and so import into it a dualism which is absent from the teaching of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Apart from the wrong notion of ‘grace’ involved, this false dualism contributed to the separation of Baptism from immediate relation to Christ, and its interpretation as a sacrament of entry into the visible society of the Church only.⁶⁴⁴

The idea of an outward sign and an inward work can hardly be described as absent from the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament Israel are chastised for placing their confidence in the outward sign of circumcision when what was really required was the circumcision of the heart. Torrance is persistent in his opposition to dualism and his views have been described by a number of scholars.⁶⁴⁵

Torrance levels the charge that there is a separation of baptism from the immediate relation to Christ. This would appear to be a legitimate criticism and a cause for the loss of the meaning of baptism.

4. Loss of the meaning of baptism

Torrance’s criticism about Westminster’s loss of the meaning of baptism comes to the very heart of this thesis. Torrance argues that because baptism is thought of ‘as a means of grace under the administration of a visible institution, practical and legal rules for its administration become the chief concern rather than its evangelical doctrine and spiritual content.’⁶⁴⁶ It would be a matter for debate whether or not considering baptism as a means of grace leads to the neglect of the evangelical doctrine and the spiritual content, but Torrance makes a valid criticism that there has been a neglect of the doctrine and spiritual content. Whether a reader is in agreement

⁶⁴³ William B. Evans, ‘Calvin, Baptism, and Latent Efficacy Again: A Reply to Rich Lusk,’ *Presbyterion* 32, no. 1 (2006).

⁶⁴⁴ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1960), p. 5.

⁶⁴⁵ Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh*; Chung, *Thomas Torrance’s Mediations and Revelation*; Ho, *A Critical Study on T. F. Torrance’s Theology of Incarnation*; Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*.

⁶⁴⁶ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1960), p. 5.

with Torrance's doctrine of baptism or not, that reader will clearly see from Torrance how he centres his doctrine of baptism in the person and work of Christ. Westminster theologians will have a different way of viewing the person and work of Christ but they still do not place the emphasis of their treatment of baptism here. The practical outcome that many authors pursue in their treatment of baptism is to arrive at a robust defence for infant baptism. Many Westminster theologians will also seek to establish that the theology of infant baptism is the primary baptism and they employ covenant theology to defend infant baptism. The question is raised, if then Torrance is a model for Westminster, how was his argument for infant baptism to be the primary baptism lost in the Church of Scotland? In defence of Torrance his emphasis throughout his presentation of baptism is the Christ event that lies behind baptism. Torrance presents an objective baptism and in his view the passive role that the infant most clearly demonstrates, is better in displaying baptism's objective nature. This leads to a further question, whether Torrance's argument for the defence of the primary nature of infant baptism, is less robust than the covenant argument for the primacy of infant baptism?

5. Covenant Theology

Torrance's issue with Westminster's covenant theology is one that has been put with greater vigour by his brother James Torrance.⁶⁴⁷ Torrance argues that the notion of covenant has been radically changed by the Westminster Standards

to mean a contract into which two parties voluntarily enter on terms of mutuality. This was a serious departure from the Biblical notion of the Covenant of Grace, and led to a legalistic conception of the Sacrament, as well as to a false emphasis upon man's own act in salvation.⁶⁴⁸

The reaction to this criticism from the Westminster community has been more directed at James Torrance who was much more outspoken than Thomas Torrance. One critic calls this a 'fundamental misrepresentation of Reformed theology,'⁶⁴⁹ Ward has challenged James Torrance's criticisms and concluded 'To stigmatise the Westminster formulation as legalistic is to evacuate grace of its redemptive

⁶⁴⁷ James B. Torrance, 'Strength and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology'.

⁶⁴⁸ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1960), p. 5. The Westminster Confession of Faith speaks of a mutual covenant but also refers in 7.1 of the voluntary condescension on God's part. Ward, *The Westminster Confession and Catechisms in Modern English*.

⁶⁴⁹ Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray's and Meredith Kline's Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (New York: University Press of America, 1999), pp. 40-41, fn. 84.

character.⁶⁵⁰ Beach has said of James Torrance that ‘Torrance’s reading of Calvin can be contested at numerous points, even as his reading of Reformed federalism is subject to serious disputation.’⁶⁵¹ Muller argues that James Torrance’s view is only sustained ‘by exaggerating Calvin’s views on the prelapsarian graciousness of God and by minimising his comments on Adam’s duties before God and God’s law’⁶⁵² and then doing the opposite for Calvin’s successors. This is one of the criticisms made by Torrance where the voice of Westminster is not clearly represented.

While the covenant concept is a recurring theme in the bible and Torrance may have overstated his objections to Westminster theology here, Westminster theology has to address the question if there is some legitimacy to Torrance’s criticism. Is it possible in places that Westminster theology places a greater emphasis on covenant than on Christ?⁶⁵³

6. Union with Christ

Union with Christ is so central to the doctrine of baptism that it is necessary to be clear what both Torrance and Westminster are saying on this topic.

The church has to be indebted to Torrance for his emphasis upon union with Christ. Westminster theologian Richard Gaffin acknowledges that in the past Westminster theologians did not give the proper place to union with Christ and thus focused on an individualistic salvation.⁶⁵⁴ Garcia quoting Venema, notes that Torrance’s approach to union with Christ (also in Niesel, Barth, Kolffhaus and Hart) was the most prominent in twentieth-century Calvin scholarship.⁶⁵⁵ Letham, a theologian from the Westminster tradition begins his *Union with Christ* by saying ‘Union with Christ is right at the centre of the Christian doctrine of salvation.’⁶⁵⁶ John Murray wrote that ‘nothing is more central or basic than union and communion

⁶⁵⁰ Rowland S. Ward, ‘Recent Criticisms of The Westminster Confession of Faith’ in *Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, Sept. 1-9, 1993, Zwolle, The Netherlands* (Neerlandia, Alberta: Inheritance Publications, 1993).

⁶⁵¹ J. Mark Beach, *Christ and the Covenant: Francis Turretin’s Federal Theology as a Defense of the Doctrine of Grace* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), p. 28.

⁶⁵² Richard A. Muller, ‘The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus À Brakel’ *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994), p. 91.

⁶⁵³ John H. Stek, ‘“Covenant” Overload in Reformed Theology,’ *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994).

⁶⁵⁴ Gaffin Jr., ‘Union with Christ: Some Biblical and Theological Reflections’, p. 271.

⁶⁵⁵ Garcia, *Life in Christ*, p.12.

⁶⁵⁶ While there is a debate going on among Westminster theologians on union with Christ and the order of salvation and not all would agree with Letham, at least the debate is taking place and Torrancian Theologians and Westminster Theologians could benefit from a joint dialogue. Letham, *Union with Christ*, p. 1.

with Christ.⁶⁵⁷ To what extent the recent focus⁶⁵⁸ from within the Westminster tradition on union with Christ is directly attributable to Torrance is difficult to establish but the prominence that Torrance and others have had throughout the previous century leaves it difficult to ignore their work or their influence.

Torrance sees in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* a reversal of the teaching of Calvin on union with Christ brought about, Torrance argues, by adhering to a 'medieval conception of the *ordo salutis* (reached through various stages of grace leading to union with Christ), which reversed the teaching of Calvin that it is through union with Christ first that we participate in all his benefits.⁶⁵⁹ Gaffin who originally published his work on union with Christ in 1977 and continues to publish on this topic, happily subscribes to the *ordo salutis* and speaks of a forensic and renovative application of redemption. Speaking of the twofold grace of justification and sanctification Gaffin says

I must have Christ or I have nothing, Calvin is saying. Absent that union, his work for me, including what he did for my justification, is simply 'useless and of no value.' Without union, the benefits that flow from it, including my justification, are nonexistent. Justification is not union-producing, a uniting justification, rather, union is justifying-effecting, a justifying union, I am justified, I have Christ's righteousness imputed to me, by faith. How? Only by being united to him by faith. In that sense I am justified by faith because by faith I am united to Christ, not the reverse.⁶⁶⁰

Clearly there is much common ground here between this Westminster theologian and Torrance. Letham takes the idea of union with Christ further. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Torrance and says that 'The basis of our union with Christ is Christ's union with us in the incarnation.'⁶⁶¹ Letham also discusses union with Christ in relation to *theosis*, a theme that Habets deals with in the writings of Torrance.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁷ Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, p. 161.

⁶⁵⁸ There is an ongoing debate within the Westminster family on whether Union with Christ flows from justification or whether justification is a benefit of Union with Christ. See Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ*; Horton, *The Christian Faith*; ch 18 Union with Christ; Gaffin Jr., 'Justification and Union with Christ'.

⁶⁵⁹ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. 128.

⁶⁶⁰ R. B. Gaffin Jr., 'A Response to John Fesko's Review,' http://opc.org/os.html?article_id=140. Accessed 3 June 2012.

⁶⁶¹ Letham, *Union with Christ*, p. 21.

⁶⁶² Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*.

Torrance alleges that there is a discontinuity on the place given to union with Christ between *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and the older Scottish theology.

The Confession did not take the line of Calvin and Scots Reformation theology in which justification and union with Christ are held inseparably together, so that apart from brief sentences on “Adoption”, the notion of justification is construed mainly in terms of a forensic “imputation” while union with Christ is understood as a “judicial union”, which must be cultivated and deepened in a spiritual and sanctifying way through the help of indwelling grace.⁶⁶³

Responding to this criticism Letham argues that ‘Torrance’s thesis is shattered by the teaching of the Larger Catechism 65-90, where all of God’s grace is said to be found in union and communion with Christ.’⁶⁶⁴

Two points can be made here. First, Torrance does not deal with all the material in the Westminster Standards. Second, the topic of union with Christ has captured the attention of Westminster theologians. Those that give a priority to union with Christ and see justification flowing from union with Christ would be closer to Torrance’s view of union with Christ, at least in the sharing of the priority of union with Christ.

Westminster theologians have certainly turned their attention back to union with Christ. However the fact that union with Christ had been allowed to be neglected for so long raises an important question, such as ‘what is it about Westminster theology, or the then existing theological climate, or what was Westminster preoccupied with that caused the neglect of such a central doctrine?’ While Westminster theologians may wince under the trenchant criticism by Torrance they surely have to admit that they exposed themselves to such criticism by their neglect of union with Christ.

7. Federal Theology

Through the latter part of the twentieth Century, scholars have set Calvin against the Calvinists. The argument follows the general line that Calvin’s evangelical dynamic theology has been succeeded by a rationalistic theology giving priority to reason and logic. Letham describes the allegations:

Doctrines were deduced from masterful premises. Causal analysis was employed throughout. Reason was accorded a priority, and the biblical text was squeezed into a rigidly imposed grid. The tensions evident in Calvin, stemming from his determination to follow the Bible, rather than to

⁶⁶³ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. 144.

⁶⁶⁴ Letham, *The Westminster Assembly*, p. 242.

form an internally consistent logical system, were ironed out by logic.⁶⁶⁵

Letham refers to the works of Richard Muller, who along with others, has responded to undermine this discontinuity claim. Letham says regarding Torrance that ‘The sea change in recent Calvinism scholarship had little effect on Thomas F. Torrance.’⁶⁶⁶

Torrance presents his theology to be in line with the older Scottish evangelical tradition which he saw was in keeping with the tradition of Calvin and Knox. The Westminster tradition, he argues, has imposed a grid of federal theology resulting in an austere form of theology which is not in keeping with Calvin. Macleod in a review of Torrance’s *Scottish Theology* acknowledges that there is much in Torrance that should command instant respect but that his claims to have the support of men like Knox, Bruce, Binning, Leighton and Boston is not securely based.⁶⁶⁷ Macleod says that Torrance is among the immortals of Scottish theology and that his work on the trinity is an enduring and priceless legacy. Macleod goes on to say of Torrance

He has placed the *homoousion* at the heart of all our belief
... I and many others embraced these contributions with
instant appreciation. But we saw in them no reason to
repudiate our past. True, some of these emphases were not
explicit in Scottish Calvinism. But they were implicit; or at
least easily assimilated. ... Dr Torrance does not need to
discredit the past to create space for his vision.⁶⁶⁸

It is evident here from Macleod that there is much to be gained by paying attention to Torrance.

McGowan identifies three positions in the Calvin versus Calvinist debate.⁶⁶⁹ In the scholarly debate there are those who argue that there is a radical discontinuity between ‘Calvin and the Calvinists’, others who argue that Calvin was the originator of federal theology and those who reason that federal theology is a natural and legitimate development from Calvin’s own thought. Whatever position is taken in this debate, the evidence does not support Torrance’s claim for a line of succession

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 106.

⁶⁶⁷ Donald Macleod, ‘Dr T. F. Torrance and Scottish Theology: A Review Article,’ *Evangelical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2000).

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

⁶⁶⁹ Andrew T. B. McGowan, ‘In Defence of Headship Theology,’ in *The God of Covenant*, eds. Jamie A. Grant and Alistair Wilson (Leicester: Apollos, 2005), pp. 180-81.

from Calvin to his doctrinal position. In a comparison of the Scots Confession and *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, McGowan concludes

that the theology of the Westminster Confession is a natural development from the theology of the Scots Confession and that any apparent changes are simply making explicit what is implicit. ... One can further argue that the attempts to place a wedge between these Confessions have been driven by a predetermined theological agenda rather than by a genuine comparison and study of the text of the documents and the theological positions held by their respective authors.⁶⁷⁰

This is an area of criticism where it would be helpful to allow Westminster to speak with a clear voice. Westminster theologians have given a robust response to this criticism. It would be unhelpful if every criticism that Torrance makes is dismissed because this criticism is not believed to reflect the voice of Westminster theology. While the Westminster tradition does not accept Torrance's assessment, it is important to acknowledge that the Calvin against the Calvinists argument was seen as plausible for a considerable period of time. Every tradition evolves. An interesting question for both Westminster theologians and Torrancian theologians is, 'what was it about Westminster's evolution that gave rise to this criticism?'

Torrance says that 'The overall framework in which this Westminster Theology was expressed derived from seventeenth century federal theology...'⁶⁷¹ Federal theology describes the relationship between God and humanity in terms of a covenant. Some theologians speak of two covenants namely the covenant of works and the covenant of grace and others speak of an inter-Trinitarian covenant of redemption. The covenant of works is seen as a covenant that God made with Adam prior to the fall and the covenant of grace describes the covenant that God entered with humanity after the fall and the development of that covenant is seen as one covenant in its various administrations in the Old Testament to its expression as the New Covenant in the New Testament. Covenant theology is presented by covenant theologians as an all-embracing system of thought, based on Scripture. Covenant is seen as an architectonic structure that holds together all the teaching of Scripture. As

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 211-12.

⁶⁷¹ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. 128.

one author from the Westminster tradition says, 'Reformed theology is synonymous with covenant theology.'⁶⁷² Warfield said that

The architectonic principle of the Westminster Confession is supplied by the schematization of the Federal Theology, which had obtained by this time in Britain, as on the Continent, a dominant position as the most commodious mode of presenting the corpus of Reformed doctrine.⁶⁷³

Torrance is correct to identify federal theology as the overall framework in which the Confession is set. However to say that federal theology gives priority to law over grace is to ignore the debates that have taken place in Scotland over the emphasis of law and grace. McGowan in his defence of federal theology which he would rather refer to as 'Headship Theology' speaks of tensions arising between those who wanted to emphasis law and those who wanted to emphasise grace. In particular McGowan refers to the Marrow Controversy at the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁶⁷⁴ One of the key issues in this dispute was the relationship between law and grace. McGowan refers to the federal theologian Thomas Boston as having a theology of grace. It is in this tradition that McGowan places himself. McGowan refers specifically to James Torrance's criticism of federal theology finding him guilty of ignoring much of the evidence and failing to make the appropriate distinctions.

The important point to note here is that it can be agreed that Westminster sees a covenantal structure to its theology and that Torrance sees everything through the lens of the incarnation. It is not the purpose here to try and ascertain which view has a more solid basis but merely to identify the difference. In this area of covenantal theology there is a current dispute taking place in relation to the role of the Mosaic Law in either the Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Grace.⁶⁷⁵ Engaging with Torrance's criticism might not have those on either side of that debate embrace Torrance's conclusions, but dialogue with a third party might help to see this more as a disagreement within the family.

⁶⁷² M. S. Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), p. 11.

⁶⁷³ B. B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931 reprint 1991), p. 56.

⁶⁷⁴ McGowan, 'In Defence of Headship Theology', p. 184.

⁶⁷⁵ Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray's and Meredith Kline's Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (New York: University Press of America, 1999).

8. Atonement

Torrance is opposed to the doctrine of limited atonement as found in the *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. It is anachronistic to impose the doctrine of limited atonement on Calvin's theology. Many do attempt to prove that Calvin held to a doctrine of limited atonement and are able to provide quotations that appear to support this and others can provide quotations that appear to support a general atonement in Calvin. Torrance is also critical of the notion of 'satisfaction'.

According to the Confession of Faith the Lord Jesus, through his perfect obedience under the law and self-sacrifice and endurance of the most grievous torments in his soul and most painful bodily sufferings, fully satisfied the justice of the Father and purchased reconciliation for us. This implied a transactional notion of atoning satisfaction in fulfilment of a divine requirement, on the ground of which the Father was induced to reconcile us, and as it were 'bought off'.⁶⁷⁶

Torrance uses pejorative terms to create a notion that Westminster's view of the atonement is merely external and transactional. There is the forensic, legal aspect to Westminster's view of the atonement but there is also the transformative aspect and the covenantal relational aspect. The confession is clear that what lay behind the atonement was God working solely from his free grace and love.⁶⁷⁷ The love of God was not bought by the atonement but the atonement was planned because God loved. Responding to criticisms of the penal substitutionary atonement Horton says,

In covenant theology the legal and relational aspects are never set at odds, as they typically are in modern theology. No more than in adoption or in marriage can legal status be set over against a relationship. On the basis of the full satisfaction of legal demands, the organic union of believers with Christ is given its due. ... Reformed theologians have often taken exception to Anselm's theory as too exclusively 'commercial' – excluding this wider covenantal horizon of Christ's active obedience in fulfilling all righteousness and our mystical union with him through faith.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁶ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. 139.

⁶⁷⁷ See Westminster Confession of Faith, Section 3:5.

⁶⁷⁸ Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 513.

9. Election

Torrance objects to the idea of double predestination in the confession and comments that this was not in keeping with the teaching of Knox. Macleod⁶⁷⁹ provides supporting evidence to show that Calvin and Knox held the same view on predestination.⁶⁸⁰ In the Institutes Calvin says,

We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.⁶⁸¹

Knox has similar to say on predestination, 'the eternall and immutable decree of God by the which he hath once determined with himself what he will have to be done with every man. For he hath not created all ... of one condition.'⁶⁸²

It is not the intention here to express any viewpoint on the doctrine of predestination but merely to note that the doctrine of predestination as taught in the confession is in keeping with that taught by both Calvin and Knox.

10. The Incarnation

Torrance objects to the lack of place given by Westminster theology to the whole historical life of Christ.⁶⁸³ Because Torrance links baptism to the whole incarnational event, then clearly to Torrance the Westminster Standards provide no platform on which to base a doctrine of baptism. The confession also gives no place for Christ's own baptism which for Torrance was a vicarious baptism. In Torrance's view the very heart of the matter has been neglected. However in Torrance's theology he needs to give the whole incarnation a primary emphasis because his doctrine of the atonement shifts away from the Easter event to the Christmas event.

In the introductory chapter we described Torrance's theology as kaleidoscopic, meaning that every doctrine can be placed at the centre and shown how they relate to every other doctrine. In any systematic approach to doctrine, as doctrines are dealt with one issue at a time, there is the danger that a doctrine can be studied in isolation

⁶⁷⁹ Macleod, 'Dr T. F. Torrance and Scottish Theology: A Review Article'.

⁶⁸⁰ The Westminster Confession of Faith does not teach double predestination.

⁶⁸¹ Calvin, *Institutes* III., XXI, 5.

⁶⁸² John Knox quoted in Macleod, 'Dr T. F. Torrance and Scottish Theology: A Review Article', pp. 58-59.

⁶⁸³ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1960), p. 5.

and its place within the whole can be lost. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* suffers this problem. But Torrance's overview methodology suffers from its lack of detail and has an ability to resist scrutiny.

Torrance makes a number of additional points on the Westminster theology outside his work in the commission. Specifically on baptism and the Westminster Standards, Torrance speaks largely favourably on what the confession has to say on baptism however he notes that a stress that was present in John Knox is absent from the confession. Torrance says that John Knox placed the stress on baptism as a sacrament of the Fatherhood of God whereas in the confession the stress falls on baptism as a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, which he believed called for the fulfilment of definite conditions. Letham comments that this criticism from Torrance 'stems from the shape of Torrance's own theology, with its apparent universalist undertones. The point he misses is that salvation has already been seen in part as adoption, by which the elect are brought into the family of God, who is now their Father.'⁶⁸⁴ In the *Larger Catechism* the *ordo salutis* and its outworking, including the church and the sacraments, is understood as union and communion with Christ in grace and glory.

Torrance speaks of the trinitarian aspect of baptism and draws attention to the fact that the confession in considering the doctrine of God does not lead with the trinity.⁶⁸⁵ It has to be acknowledged that there has been a neglect of the trinity in the Western Church. Westminster theologian Letham says 'sadly, since the time of Calvin little of significance has been contributed to the development of Trinitarian doctrine in conservative Reformed theologians.'⁶⁸⁶ Letham goes on to say, 'This lacuna on the part of conservative Christianity is little short of tragic.'⁶⁸⁷ Karl Rahner said that many churches

notwithstanding their exact profession of the Trinity, are almost alone as 'monotheists' in the practice of their religious life. One can even risk claiming that if the Trinity should have been suppressed as false doctrine, a great part of the religious literature could still remain unchanged after this occurrence.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁴ Letham, *The Westminster Assembly*, pp. 342-343.

⁶⁸⁵ Muller defends the order of dealing first with the divine attributes and then with the Trinity. See Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 3, pp. 154-159.

⁶⁸⁶ R. Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004), p. ix.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. x.

⁶⁸⁸ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1967 reprint 1997), p. 11.

Grenz in his survey of contemporary teaching on the trinity notes the importance of the roles of Barth and Rahner in the revival of trinitarian theology. He says of Torrance's *The Christian Doctrine of God*, that it might be considered to be the last comprehensive trinitarian theological offering of the twentieth century. Grenz devotes a chapter to Torrance.⁶⁸⁹ Letham devotes a chapter to Torrance in his work on the trinity and acknowledges that Torrance's work on the trinity is probably the best to date.⁶⁹⁰ Within the reformed tradition the impact of the revival of a trinitarian theology has given rise to a discussion on how the trinity should be reflected in the liturgy.⁶⁹¹

With regard to the doctrine of God Torrance says that, 'In the Confession of Faith itself God is said to be lawgiver and judge, but only said to be Father properly in his relation to those who are elected, justified and "made partakers of the grace of adoption" and are thus "enabled to cry Abba Father."' ⁶⁹² Here Torrance is referring to section 12 of the confession which has the heading 'adoption'. The confession is referring to the Holy Spirit who enables the Christian to cry *Abba Father*. In section 2 the Confession unambiguously affirms the eternal fatherhood of God – 'The order seen in the external operations of the three persons reflects the eternal reality that each person possesses a property distinct from the others: the Father eternally possesses fatherhood in relation to the Son ...' ⁶⁹³

Torrance's contribution to trinitarian studies is acknowledged by many theologians from different traditions. The trinity does now receive more attention from Westminster theologians and this recovery is no doubt partly due, if not largely due to the influence of Torrance.

Conclusion

In this discussion it has been demonstrated that there is a need to clarify what Westminster really says. Westminster theology does not subscribe to the incarnational redemption that operates at an ontological level in Torrance's theology. However many of the emphases that Torrance stresses can be agreed upon: the work of atonement is objective and humanity can play no part in meriting salvation; the

⁶⁸⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 3.

⁶⁹⁰ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, p. 373.

⁶⁹¹ John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶⁹² Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, p. 131.

⁶⁹³ Ward, *The Westminster Confession and Catechisms in Modern English*, 2.3.

cause of the atonement was the love of God; God's overture towards humanity is one of free grace; and from Torrance's perspective the Westminster understanding of the atonement would be naturally seen as one of external relations because it was not ontological. However, when atonement is set within the covenant context, then it can be seen to have a relational character to it. The purpose of this section was to permit Westminster to have a clearer voice so that useful dialogue can take place enabling the best possible construction to be placed on each other's theologies.

To create the inertia to get one idea noticed and to have the idea placed on the theological agenda requires stature and a degree of brilliance. Torrance has drawn attention to several areas of neglect and established, refreshed and renewed the agenda in theology. Today theologians are discussing the doctrines that Torrance brought out of hibernation. This is not the place to account for the reason Westminster theology neglected so many of these vital and central doctrines. The deeper question relates to the cause of Westminster's neglect of these doctrines and what there is about Torrance's theology that places these neglected doctrines right at the centre of his theology.

It becomes evident that there is much to gain from a dialogue between Westminster theologians and Torrancian theologians. To help the dialogue it would be useful to establish the following:

1. An agreement on what Westminster actually teaches,
2. An acknowledgement by Westminster of its neglect of some central doctrines,
3. A willingness to explore why these doctrines were neglected,
4. Carry out a careful assessment of how Westminster theology has evolved from Calvin's teaching and to what extent this theology has developed,
5. Identify Torrance's unique contribution on incarnational redemption,
6. An assessment of the extent that Torrance's followers have developed his ideas.

It is not possible within the scope of this thesis to engage in dialogue with Torrance in all these areas but in the next chapter an attempt will be made to enter constructive dialogue with Torrance to seek to recover and renew the meaning of baptism in reformed theology.

Chapter Five: Recovering the Meaning of Baptism in Reformed Theology

In this Chapter we explore how Westminster can recover the proper focus on the meaning of baptism by learning from Torrance's example. That meaning is embedded in the objective nature of baptism, that one baptism of Christ and the church. In the previous chapter we demonstrated that Torrance has a voice that is distinct from his two favourite and often quoted church fathers, Irenaeus and Athanasius. We also observed that Torrance has developed Calvin's theology. Torrance was also seen to have engaged in revising, as opposed to merely editing, Wotherspoon's and Kirkpatrick's *Manual of Church Doctrine*. This assessment enabled the conclusion to be drawn that Torrance has a soteriological paradigm that differs from the two church fathers Irenaeus and Athanasius, Calvin and two of Torrance's Church of Scotland predecessors, Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick.

Consideration was also given to Torrance's criticism of Westminster theology. The purpose of responding to Torrance's criticism was to establish a clearer Westminster voice.

Having taken these steps to arrive at a clearer voice for both Torrance and Westminster it is now possible to build on that in a discussion between Torrance and Westminster on a doctrine of baptism. Allowing the two voices to engage with each other will permit Torrance to assist Westminster theology to refocus on the meaning of baptism. Torrance serves to challenge the neglects and weaknesses in Westminster's doctrine of baptism. Attention will be given to the ways that Torrance has attempted to solve the weaknesses he sees in Westminster's theology of baptism. Having examined the strengths and weaknesses in the doctrine of baptism in both traditions a number of probing questions will be addressed to both views to examine the capacity that each has to provide an adequate response. We will conclude the chapter by addressing the extent to which there can be a synthesis of Torrance and Westminster on a doctrine of baptism. Torrance has the capacity to help Westminster baptismal theology press forward towards a synthesis, albeit an asymmetric synthesis, on the doctrine of baptism and to place the discussion of baptism where it really belongs, on the meaning of baptism centred in Christ. However before comparing and contrasting Torrance's and Westminster's doctrines of baptism an outline of a typically reformed doctrine of baptism will be given.

Westminster theology is not a monolithic set of doctrines and since the publication of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* there have been disagreements and developments within this tradition. While there are differences within the reformed tradition on how infant baptism should be explained and defended, Bavinck⁶⁹⁴ will be used as a representative of the traditionally reformed view.

5.1 Bavinck's Doctrine of Baptism

Since the doctrine of baptism is so closely linked with soteriology, consideration will also be given to Bavinck's covenant theology. Some of the points made about Bavinck's theology have in mind the criticisms of Westminster theology made by Torrance, which were considered in detail in Chapter Four. Since Torrance rejects baptismal regeneration and a symbolism in baptism and advocates infant baptism he has already much in common with Westminster theology. Westminster theology is the theology that comes under the rubric of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. However, under that rubric there is diversity of opinion. Any choice of representative will therefore have its challengers as to whether or not the one chosen is properly representative. Herman Bavinck will be used here to present a covenantal theology similar to that of Westminster theology. There are a number of reasons for this choice. First, Bavinck is a well established and respected figure within the Westminster, Three Forms of Unity, traditions; second, Bavinck relates baptism to his covenantal view of soteriology; third, Bavinck stresses the importance of the incarnation for the covenantal solidarity of Christ with his people; fourth, Bavinck emphasises union with Christ and that Christ and his benefits are enjoyed only through union with Christ.⁶⁹⁵

Whereas Torrance links baptism with an ontological healing through incarnational union with Christ, Bavinck sets his doctrine of baptism firmly within a covenantal framework. The one great and all-embracing promise of the covenant is: 'I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you. (Gen. 17:7).'⁶⁹⁶ In Bavinck's view the covenant of grace is introduced by God to humanity after the

⁶⁹⁴ In an assessment of Bavinck's theology of covenant and election, Venema says that 'Though it would be unfair to say that Bavinck offers only a restatement of the traditional consensus or received opinion of Reformed theology on these topics, at every point, Bavinck remains within the broad centre of what might be termed "catholic" Reformed theology.' C. P. Venema, 'Bavinck the Dogmatician: The Doctrine of the Covenant,' *The Outlook* 61, no. 1 (2011), p. 1.

⁶⁹⁵ Two further examples of an emphasis on union with Christ from the school of Westminster Theology can be found in Garcia, *Life in Christ*; Letham, *Union with Christ*.

⁶⁹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 499.

fall.⁶⁹⁷ The sense of guilt and shame that Adam and Eve felt showed ‘that the human beings in question had not been hardened, that they had not become devils but remained human.’⁶⁹⁸ This is an important point to note. For Bavinck, humans remained human after the fall, they remain the image of God. No ontological change results from the fall, for Bavinck, but the fall was a breaking of the covenant of works and resulted in a religious change for humanity and a loss of communion with God. Unlike the fallen angels ‘in the case of humans, God held back the full effect of the principle and power of sin.’⁶⁹⁹

The covenant of grace is viewed by Bavinck as a unilateral covenant imposed upon humanity by a Sovereign God. ‘The covenant is anchored solely in his compassion.’⁷⁰⁰ It is God who takes the initiative to bring humanity into relationship with himself. In Bavinck’s understanding there can only be a true fellowship between God and humanity if God comes down to humans and enters into a covenant with them.⁷⁰¹ This covenant of grace is not based on humanity’s virtues or works but is unalterably grounded in God’s mercy.

Christ as mediator of the covenant of grace endured sin and fulfilled the law on behalf of his own because he had entered into a covenant relationship with them. Christ is at the heart of the covenant and Christ gives himself to his people, ‘not only objectively in redemption, but also imparts himself subjectively in sanctification and unites himself with them in a spiritual and mystical manner.’⁷⁰² The mystical union with Christ began, according to Bavinck, in the intratrinitarian *pactum salutis*. ‘The incarnation and satisfaction presuppose that Christ is the head and mediator of the covenant.’⁷⁰³ Christ is the mediator of the covenant of grace ‘who not only unites God and humanity but prior to this reconciles the two, so restoring the broken fellowship between them.’⁷⁰⁴ For Bavinck the incarnation gives Christ a covenantal solidarity with his people. Throughout Christ’s life he is obedient to God’s law, described as his active obedience, and on the cross Christ atones for the sin of his

⁶⁹⁷ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, 4 vols., vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), p. 197.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-5.

⁷⁰² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 250.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, 3, p. 238.

people, described as Christ's passive obedience. Every benefit that Christ's people receive is through union with Christ.

Bavinck's soteriology is developed within a covenant context. The sacrament of baptism then is seen by Bavinck as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. Baptism is a visible holy sign and seal 'instituted by God so that he might make believers understand more clearly and reassure them of the promises and benefits of the covenant of grace, and believers on their part might confess and confirm their faith and love before God, angels, and humankind.'⁷⁰⁵ Bavinck finds that the foundation for baptism was laid in the Old Testament covenant sign of circumcision. God is clearly the giver of both the covenant signs of circumcision and baptism. The Old Testament sign of circumcision served as a sign and confirmation of the covenant of grace. This sign sealed the two benefits of the covenant – the righteousness of faith and the circumcision of the heart. The Old Testament sign did not confer these benefits in a mechanical way because the outward external circumcision without the internal circumcision of the heart was without value. In the New Testament administration of the covenant of grace baptism was the sign and seal of grace that was instituted by God. In fact, Bavinck insists that baptism only became a sacrament because of being instituted by God. Bavinck explains that baptism 'took place for the "forgiveness of sins" because by baptism as sign and seal one obtains forgiveness.'⁷⁰⁶ Bavinck also views baptism as the rite of incorporation into fellowship with the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He views baptism as a descent into and a rising out of the water depicting the entering into fellowship with Christ, his death and resurrection. As one enters this communion with Christ, so one enters into fellowship with the Church which is the body of Christ.

Bavinck relates how the reformers took their lead in understanding of baptism from the baptism of believers. Since baptism had been instituted for believers, baptism did not effect faith but strengthened it. This approach raised two very important issues concerning infant baptism, says Bavinck. First, it had to be demonstrated how children of believers were to be regarded as believers and ought to be baptized; second, what did baptism do in the case of an infant since it did not have 'actual faith' and therefore it would not be possible to strengthen them in this faith. For Bavinck, 'A person is entitled to baptism not by faith and repentance but only

⁷⁰⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 473.

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

because of the covenant.⁷⁰⁷ Arising out of this understanding of children being included in the covenant came two different assumptions regarding the implications for the infant. There were those who presumed the regeneration of the child, until the child was old enough to demonstrate otherwise. Others were prepared to leave the matter open acknowledging ‘that God’s grace is not bound to means and can also work regeneration in the heart of very young children, but they left open the question whether in the case of elect infants that regeneration occurred before, during, or also, sometimes even a great many years after baptism.’⁷⁰⁸ The latter was the view held by Calvin and it became the view most widely accepted. Over time baptism was totally separated from regeneration. Under the influence of pietism less and less value was given to the external act of baptism and instead insistence on personal conversion was emphasized. Those seeking to maintain an objective baptism argued for baptism as a sign of the external covenant. Bavinck summarises the impact of this development by stating that baptism was deprived of its value. Like Torrance, Bavinck favours an objective understanding of baptism. However, unlike Torrance, Bavinck believes that the biblical pattern for baptism is adult baptism. In the New Testament the presentation and acceptance of the word of the gospel preceded baptism. As a result Bavinck concludes that ‘Adult baptism is therefore the original baptism; infant baptism is derivative; the former must not be conformed to the latter, but the latter must be conformed to the former.’⁷⁰⁹ Bavinck refers to the reformation principle, with approval, ‘that the sacrament imparts no other benefit than that which believers already possess by trusting in the Word of God.’⁷¹⁰

With regard to a sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified Bavinck acknowledges a divinely forged link between the visible sign and the invisible spiritual benefit. On the suitability of the choice of water as a sign, the water of baptism, reasons Bavinck, is specifically chosen as the sign because it so adequately depicts the thing signified, and is a seal of the washing away of sins and spiritual renewal. Here Bavinck makes a close link between his soteriology and baptism. Sin for Bavinck is the human condition that Christ came to solve and baptism is so closely associated with the work of salvation.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 510.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 511.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 526.

⁷¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 515.

The benefits of baptism granted to the adult believer are all included in the fellowship with the triune God that they are brought into.

In baptism the Father witnesses to us that he makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us as his children and heirs (Gen. 17:7,10; Acts 2:39). The Son assures us that he washes us in his blood and incorporates us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). The Holy Spirit assures us that he lives in us and sanctifies us to be members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:11; 12:13; Titus 3:5).⁷¹¹

These benefits include justification or the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, repentance, sanctification and fellowship not only with Christ himself, but also with the church which is his body.

Bavinck's view that adult baptism is the primary baptism gives rise to the question of how he then can find an argument to support infant baptism. Bavinck notes the fact that a substantial part of the Christian church rejects infant baptism on the grounds of the Scripture's silence on the subject, the fact that if baptism presupposes faith and repentance that this can hardly exist in infants, and the silence of Church History with regard to the baptism of infants up until the time of Tertullian. Bavinck explains the silence from early church history as the inevitable result of the rapid expansion of the church and the baptising of adult proselytes and as time moved on then infant baptism became the normal practice, except in mission field situations. Bavinck rejects arguments that suggest that the faith of the parents serves in the place of the infant's faith.

Bavinck bases his defence of infant baptism within the context of the covenant of grace, 'which according to God's promise, embraces not only believers but also their descendants.'⁷¹² Following Calvin, Bavinck argues that it is not regeneration, faith or repentance or indeed any assumptions relating to them, but only the covenant of grace gives adults and infants the right to be baptised. This for Bavinck was the objective ground for infant baptism and there did not exist any better or more profound defence of infant baptism than the covenant of grace. The validity of infant baptism, according to Bavinck, depends on how Scripture regards the children of believers. If, reasons Bavinck, Scripture speaks about children of believers in the same way that it speaks about adult believers then the right to infant baptism is established. Nothing

⁷¹¹ Ibid., p. 519.

⁷¹² Ibid., p. 525.

less or more should be required of the infant in baptism than is required of the adult in baptism.

Bavinck's interpretation of Col. 2:11-12 leads him to believe that baptism has taken the place of circumcision. Again linking his soteriology closely with his doctrine of baptism Bavinck speaks of a spiritual circumcision that

took place in Christ by the means and power of the circumcision that Christ himself underwent in his death with respect to sin, at the moment when they were buried and raised again with Christ in baptism. Through the death of Christ, which was a complete putting off of sin and victory over sin and hence fully realized the idea of circumcision, that circumcision has been rendered obsolete and came to its antitypical fulfilment in baptism. Baptism, therefore, is more than circumcision, not in essence but in degree. Circumcision pointed forward to the death of Christ; baptism points back to it.⁷¹³

Bavinck reasons that if circumcision as a sign of the covenant was administered to infants⁷¹⁴ then baptism as a sign of the covenant must be administered to infants.

Bavinck notes how parents and children are regarded together in the Old Testament, they prosper together, together they serve the Lord, and parents are required to pass on to the children the acts and ordinances of God. In an observation from church history Bavinck notes that while grace is not an automatic inheritance, as a rule it is bestowed along the line of generations. In the New Testament the link between parent and child is evident. Bavinck gives the example of the children of Jewish parents, that even though these Jewish parents reject Christ, that Christ still regards their children as covenant children. Bavinck draws out the implications of Peter's preaching in Acts 2:39, that the Jews who convert to Christ not only receive the promise of the covenant for themselves but also for their children. He also speaks of household salvations to emphasise the solidarity of the household unit. From 1 Cor. 7:14, while admitting that this does not refer to infant baptism, Bavinck sees an example of the link between the parent and the child. On account of the parent's faith the child is seen in some way to be holy.⁷¹⁵ The main point of importance that Bavinck draws from this passage is that it teaches that the whole family is regarded in

⁷¹³ Ibid., p. 527.

⁷¹⁴ Circumcision was administered only to male infants. Bavinck argues that because of the richer grace of baptism it is administered to both male and female infants.

⁷¹⁵ 'The holiness Paul mentions here must not be taken as subjective and internal holiness but as an objective, theocratic kind of holiness ...' Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 529.

light of the confession of the believing spouse. The children of believers are included in the covenant and are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the covenant. The basis for baptism is not an assumption that the person is regenerate but rather the covenant of grace. Bavinck openly acknowledges that not all the baptised walk in the way of the covenant. Bavinck does not equate election with covenant membership and the moment of regeneration can be before, during, or sometime after baptism.⁷¹⁶

5.2 Critiquing Torrance's Doctrine of Baptism

It is difficult to compare two paradigms just because of the very nature of paradigmatic differences. Criticism of one aspect of a paradigm can often be based on the assertion that it cannot be true or right otherwise it would violate a part of the critic's own paradigm. A further difficulty is that theological terms used by both paradigms can have different meanings. There is a beauty to Torrance's paradigm and once mastered the intellectual rigour involved in understanding how that paradigm fits together adds to the enjoyment and a sense of wonder at its coherence and beauty. This all adds to the plausibility of what is a well thought out paradigm centred on the incarnation of Christ and the link of revelation and reconciliation with Christ's incarnation. Torrance's paradigm has rich offerings. It offers Christ centeredness, an objective ruling out of Pelagianism and legalism and is also trinitarian in structure. These are worthy offerings and add to the appeal of Torrance's paradigm. However Torrance needs to be 'caught' before he gets into full stride so that his initial assumptions can be examined.

The major point of agreement between a covenantal view and Torrance's view is that baptism is associated with an objective work of God. A second area of agreement is that both views support infant baptism. In soteriology the importance of the incarnation, conception, life, death, resurrection, ascension and continuing priestly ministry of Christ is emphasised in both paradigms. Torrance has had an influence upon a number of Westminster theologians in helping them to pay more attention to the incarnation, union with Christ and the doctrine of the trinity.

There are however three vital differences between Torrance and Westminster:

1. What is the human condition that Christ came to solve?

⁷¹⁶ 'It cannot even be proved that the elect are always regenerated by the Holy Spirit in their youth, before their baptism, or even before their birth. God is free in the distribution of his grace and can also let people enjoy the fruit of their baptism at a much later age.', Ibid., p. 531.

2. What is the nature of the solution to the human condition? The atonement in both paradigms is shaped according to the understanding of the problem it has to overcome.
3. Since baptism is linked with soteriology in both paradigms it leads to the ground of baptism being different in both cases.

We demonstrated in Chapter One that throughout church history that the doctrine of baptism was mostly determined by soteriology. This is the case with both Bavinck and Torrance.

5.2.1 The Human Condition Dealt with in the Atonement

To understand the work that takes place at this ontological level (the level of being) it is necessary to grasp how Torrance views the problem in humanity that Christ came to solve. According to Torrance God created humans to have fellowship with God, with their fellow human beings and in harmony with creation. The bond of fellowship between God and human beings is broken in the fall by rebellion and sin. Torrance describes this fall as an ‘internal rupture’ which affects the relationship with God, with fellow human beings and with creation. Torrance, following the Augustinian tradition, sees that evil can be viewed as a privation of the good, but his clear emphasis is to view evil in its ontological effects as resulting in ‘non-being’ and tending towards chaos and annihilation.⁷¹⁷ Torrance does not believe that it is possible to define evil because evil is irrational. In fact, for Torrance, awareness of evil would not be possible without a rational order of things. Evil is ‘entrenched in the ontological depths of created existence’ and is disruptive and alienating.⁷¹⁸ Sin produces disorder and therefore the cure of sin, for Torrance, will understand atonement as related to the restoration of order. Robertson notes that ‘seeing evil in such cosmic terms Torrance tends not to emphasise the personal side of sin, and must see the atonement as primarily dealing with this contradiction that man is involved in.’⁷¹⁹ Torrance places his emphasis on original sin rather than actual sins. To concentrate on actual sins, for Torrance, merely leads to legalistic views of the atonement. When these ontological aspects of evil are kept in view then the atonement, in Torrance’s view, is not to focus on humanity’s rebellion, but rather to counteract the consequences of the impact of evil’s corruption and the lapse towards

⁷¹⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), p. 117.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷¹⁹ L. G. Robertson, *The Relationship between Incarnation and Atonement in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* (Australian College of Theology, 1990), p. 140.

non-being.⁷²⁰ The influence of Barth can be seen in Torrance's view of sin. For Barth, it is only in the light of the coming of Christ that humanity knows that they are totally evil.⁷²¹ Because of Torrance's view of the plight of humanity, he speaks of the cure to this plight as an 'ontological salvation.'⁷²²

Torrance assumes that the human condition as a result of the fall leaves humanity in a state of contradiction. Torrance speaks of fallen humanity as ontologically deeply split within themselves.⁷²³ Torrance never quite defines the ontological split, but he suggests that a remedy is required to prevent humanity from drifting into non-being. Bayne states that sin can be conceptualised in three ways: ontologically, deontically, and relationally. He defines the ontological conception of sin as a feature or element of human nature; it is something from which humanity suffers. The deontic conception of sin conceives of sin in terms of a failure to fulfil moral obligations. The relational conception of sin conceives of it in terms of broken or alienated relationships.⁷²⁴ The definition of the ontological way of understanding sin is somewhat vague and does not quite grasp what Torrance has in mind. Bavinck views the human condition as a moral and ethical problem. Horton argues that 'as the interpretation of sin unfolds in redemptive revelation, we encounter again an ethical-covenantal rather than ontological concept...'⁷²⁵ Horton adds, 'there are metaphysical and ontological consequences of covenant transgression, such as human death as the judicial sentence, but the essence of sin itself is legal, forensic, and ethical ...'⁷²⁶

5.2.2 The Nature of the Solution to the Human Condition

This difference in the understanding of the human condition inevitably shapes both views of soteriology. Because Torrance views the human condition on the level of ontology then the solution to the human condition will be at the level of ontology. From this flows Torrance's insistence on the unity of the work of Christ and the person of Christ. This is because the work to save is taking place, in Torrance's understanding, within the person of Christ. The ontological problem is ontologically healed by the being that Christ has become. Torrance views the Westminster

⁷²⁰ Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p. 74.

⁷²¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol., IV/1, p. 405.

⁷²² Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, p. 116.

⁷²³ T. F. Torrance, 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition,' *Modern Theology* 4, no. 4 (1988), p. 312.

⁷²⁴ T. Bayne & G. Restall, 'A Participatory Model of the Atonement,' in *New Waves in Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Y. Nagasawa, and E. Wielenberg (London: Palgrave, 2008).

⁷²⁵ Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 414.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 425.

soteriology as introducing a dualism between the person and work of Christ. Torrance believes that in the Westminster view, the work of Christ becomes an external transaction where Christ's body merely serves as an instrument in the payment of a debt. This view, says Torrance, is couched in transactional terms, an arrangement between the Father and the Son as Christ pays for the human condition of sin. Torrance complains that this produces no ontological change in fallen humanity. In other words a debt is paid but no change takes place within fallen humanity. But Torrance's criticism of Westminster's view of the atonement falls on deaf ears because there is no agreement on what the human condition is. To paraphrase Torrance, he is saying that the Westminster view does not address the ontological problem. Of course, Torrance is correct, it does not, because that is not believed to be the problem. The paradigms are not engaging here. Torrance believes that this view separates the atonement from the incarnation. The response to this criticism could be that Westminster does separate the atonement from the incarnation simply because Torrance collapses the atonement into the incarnation. Torrance is merely offering criticism of aspects of a different paradigm that is not consistent with the assumptions of his own paradigm. Torrance should not really expect the Westminster view of the atonement to be like his view because the human condition in each paradigm is understood in different ways. Torrance along with Barth objects to most Western doctrines of the atonement because

they kept interpreting the sacrifice of Christ on the cross mainly as an external transference of penalty between sinners and God, rather than as the culmination of God's incarnational penetrations into the alienated roots of humanity in order to cancel sin and guilt and undo the past, and to effect with it once for all atoning reconciliation between the world and himself.⁷²⁷

5.2.3 The Ground of Baptism

Torrance and Westminster are divided on the human condition and their understanding of the nature of the atonement is different. Since baptism is linked to the atonement then for Torrance his doctrine of baptism is grounded in the incarnation and the one vicarious baptism of Christ. Bavinck's doctrine of baptism is linked with his covenantal view. Humanity broke the covenant relationship with God, and Christ has come as the covenant representative and atoned for sin, restoring

⁷²⁷ T. F. Torrance, 'Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1988), p. 476.

the covenantal relationship, and the covenant child participates in all the benefits of Christ through union with Christ. Baptism then in Bavinck's view is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace.

Torrance's doctrine of baptism was not accepted by the Church of Scotland Assembly after the extensive survey of baptism by Torrance as convenor of the Special Commission on Baptism. Many were confused by much of what Torrance said. Much of the confusion arises from not grasping that Torrance was teaching a new paradigm. Much of the work on baptism was the expounding of the new paradigm. Torrance's work on baptism set aside the traditional covenantal arguments for infant baptism and based his defence of infant baptism on incarnational union with Christ. Today in the Church of Scotland adult baptism is viewed as the primary baptism and infant baptism as the derivative. Infant baptism does not command the position that it once had in the Church of Scotland, a situation that has come about through the church's rejection of Torrance's view of infant baptism. It raises the question, 'if a more traditional argument based on covenantal theology had been used would the Church of Scotland's doctrine of baptism have remained unchanged?'

The arena where the work of salvation is carried out is for Torrance within the person or being of Christ at the level of ontology. For Torrance, Christ is bringing about an ontological change restoring humanity to humanness. Who Christ became in humanity is the essence of the work of salvation. In the union between Christ and humanity takes place the healing of humanity. Torrance's view of baptism is linked with this soteriology. Christ descended into humanity and through resurrection ascended back to the Father bringing humanity into the fellowship of the trinity. In Christ's vicarious baptism where he was baptised for humanity he was baptised into the sufferings of his life and death, to be raised in resurrection and ascension and appears before the Father in his priestly ministry. Torrance believes that the efficacy of baptism rests objectively upon the fact that Christ confesses before the face of his Father in Heaven all those who confess him before men. The relation of the priestly ministry of Christ to baptism is closely related to human participation. There is only one baptism for Torrance and that is Christ's baptism. Every baptised person is baptised into this one baptism of Christ. Bavinck however lays stress on the work of atonement associated with what took place on the cross. Bavinck does not ignore the importance of the incarnation or merely view it as a means to an end. Within the context of the covenant of grace Christ the mediator of the covenant became human

that he might have covenant solidarity with his people. Every benefit of the covenant promise is a benefit that is only received through union with Christ. As a human, Christ fulfilled the law of God in a life of active obedience.

5.3 Critique of Torrance's Use of Scripture in His Doctrine of Baptism

Torrance's use of Scripture in the development of baptism was outlined in Chapter Two. David Wright⁷²⁸ and George Hunsinger⁷²⁹ acknowledge Torrance's significant contribution on the subject of baptism. Yet a browse of the indexes of many books produced on baptism in the last 40 to 50 years will show that Torrance has largely been ignored. Have Wright and Hunsinger overstated Torrance's contribution? Wright believes that the failure of the Commission rested on Torrance's questionable use of Scripture.⁷³⁰

Torrance does the church a great service by showing the continuity that there is between the Old and New Testaments. Torrance also picks up on redemptive historical themes such as Word, water, life, and enlightenment tracing them in how God works by his Spirit through the Word in the creation, to the New Exodus and then the New Creation. However, Torrance could have drawn on a wider range of Old Testament data. Others who have dealt with these Old Testament themes to examine the preparations that were made for baptism speak of the Creation, the Flood, the Red Sea, the washings in the law of Moses and the birth of an infant.⁷³¹ Leithart⁷³² has dealt with the Old Testament theme of the ordination of the priest, and has presented that as the most appropriate background for understanding New Testament baptism as the ordination of New Testament people who are baptised into a kingdom of priests.

While Torrance wishes to stress what he calls a 'dimension in depth' to baptism, linking baptism with the whole life of Christ as opposed to the emphasis that traditionally was placed on the death and resurrection of Christ, it appears at times that Torrance places more emphasis on the incarnation than on the death and resurrection. However, it needs to be understood that there is not agreement on where the atonement is located. Torrance does not always explain clearly, at least when he is dealing with baptism, why this is the case. For Torrance the incarnation has an ontological healing associated with it and his teaching on baptism becomes

⁷²⁸ Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 44.

⁷²⁹ Hunsinger, 'The Dimension of Depth'.

⁷³⁰ Wright, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective*, p. 305.

⁷³¹ Edward Bickersteth, *A Treatise on Baptism* (London: Seeley and Burnside, 1840).

⁷³² Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism*.

inexorably tied up with this ontological aspect to salvation. Torrance seeks support for this view in his understanding of a number of biblical terms.

Torrance's use of etymology has been severely criticised by James Barr. There are very little data available on the use of the word *baptisma* in the New Testament and while it is acknowledged that Torrance is correct to point out that this is a new word introduced by the New Testament writers it must equally be acknowledged that Torrance offers very little basis for drawing from the data the idea of an objective, incarnational, vicarious, general baptism of Christ. The limited data do not support these conclusions (See Appendix One).

James Barr, who was part of the Church of Scotland's Commission on Baptism vigorously contests this stress on the difference between the two terms. Barr mentions that while Oepke⁷³³ says that *Baptismos* designates the act in itself and that *Baptisma* the act including the result, Torrance has exploited the meaning so that

the linguistic difference between *Baptismos* and *Baptisma* is now being used as evidence for the colossal theological difference between a mere rite and an event or act of God. It is at once evident that the evidence is being exaggerated, and at the same time there is a clear departure from the semantics of actual usage in the NT.⁷³⁴

Torrance in his interpretation of John 1:12-13 (see Chapter Two) demonstrates how willing he is to reject the substantial textual evidence and exaggerate the unanimity that he finds in the early church fathers to adopt a reading that supports his *a priori* theological paradigm. While Torrance correctly distinguishes between the ritual of baptism and the objective event behind the ritual he has invested too much in the distinction between the two terms.

5.4 Torrance's Focus on the Meaning of Baptism

The legacy of Torrance's doctrine of baptism for the whole church rests in what Torrance has done so consistently throughout his career, and that is draw the attention of the church to doctrines it had neglected. The meaning of baptism as centred in Christ's person and work is often neglected because of a preoccupation with the question of who the proper recipient of baptism is. The traditional debate deals with issues such as the faith of the adult; the efficacy of the ritual or the covenant status of the infant. Baptism's link with Christology and soteriology is not usually denied, but

⁷³³ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds) trans Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), Vol. 1, pp. 529-546.

⁷³⁴ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 142.

Torrance consistently draws attention to the central role of Christ in understanding the meaning of baptism.

The meaning of baptism is more closely associated with union with Christ than with arguments that merely focus on who is the proper recipient of baptism – adult or infant? In virtually all of his work on the subject of baptism his very clear focus is to link baptism with his Christology and Soteriology. For this reason Torrance can aid the recovery of the meaning of baptism in reformed theology. Four important questions arise from the consideration of the two traditions. First, can Torrance serve as an example for Westminster's presentation of their doctrine of baptism? Second, what are the strengths and weaknesses of each view of baptism? Third, how is each view of baptism able to deal with the usual questions that arise concerning baptism? Fourth, to what extent can there be a synthesis of the two traditions?

Finally following the lead of Bavinck, Bannerman and Cunningham the theology of covenant baptism as it relates to the disciple will be presented and following Torrance's example will place an emphasis upon the person and work of Christ. This view will essentially agree with the broader conclusion of the Church of Scotland that adult baptism is the primary baptism and infant baptism is derivative.

5.4.1 Can Torrance Serve as an Example to Recover the Meaning of Baptism?

The consideration to this point between Westminster and Torrance has not attempted to establish which view is correct. It has merely explored the difficulty in relating two views that are based on two different theological paradigms. When there is disagreement at the fundamental level of the nature of the human predicament, then that sends soteriology on different trajectories. The question that arises then is whether either view of baptism can inform or serve the other. The issue of which paradigm is correct is beyond the scope of this project. The answer to this question would have to be obtained by an examination of biblical revelation to establish if there is a basis for a covenantal paradigm or an incarnational paradigm to describe biblical soteriology. The exercise here is to have Westminster theology borrow elements from Torrance's paradigm that would be consistent with its own paradigm, to assist Westminster focus on aspects of baptismal theology previously neglected. Mention has already been made of the doctrines of the trinity, the incarnation, union with Christ and the importance of the sacraments that Torrance's theology has

stressed. Westminster has already benefited from having its attention drawn to these doctrines.

In relation to the efficacy of baptism Westminster, following Calvin, will argue that the sacrament of baptism is always efficacious, because if faith does not manifest itself in the baptised person at some future point then only a water rite has been performed and the sacrament of baptism was never received. This can lead to a subjective view of baptism. However this can be countered by reasoning that faith is the gift of God, thus restoring the objective nature of baptism. However this would appear to reduce baptism to a 'wait and see' application of water, and does not appear to be consistent with the explanation of baptism. Torrance seeks to avoid this dilemma by placing the efficacy of baptism in Christ. However Torrance does not satisfactorily resolve what this means when the baptised person does not follow in the way of Christ. This also has an element of 'wait and see' that Torrance cannot explain, choosing to label this as just as enigmatic as evil itself. Torrance has further unanswered questions because his universal ontological union with Christ strongly suggests a universal redemption even though Torrance strenuously denies being a universalist.

Both Torrance and Westminster describe their theology of baptism in terms of discipleship making. Calvin clearly develops his theology of baptism in terms of discipleship making, and then goes on to apply this theology to the infant. As previously discussed Bavinck draws attention to this confusion in Calvin and his followers. Bavinck develops his theology of baptism in terms of discipleship making and limits his argument for infant baptism to depend upon the existence of the covenant. Torrance's doctrine of baptism avoids this problem because his focus on baptism is not in relation to what is happening *in* the adult or *in* the infant but rather what has happened vicariously in Christ.

The main lessons to draw from Torrance's doctrine of baptism are:

- The close link of soteriology and baptism drawing attention to the meaning of baptism,
- An objective baptism based on Christ's vicarious baptism,
- Christ's baptism takes in the whole incarnation from the virgin birth through to the ascension,
- The central role of union with Christ,

- The important distinction between the ritual and the content of baptism, and
- The eschatological emphasis of baptism.

It has previously been mentioned that Torrance's holistic style lends itself to relating a doctrine to every other doctrine and therefore when he deals with baptism it will simply be a matter of style of presentation that results in baptism being related to his whole theological scheme. It could be argued that the close link between Torrance's doctrine of baptism and the person and work of Christ is an accident of his style and would be the same whatever the subject that Torrance deals with. The strength of this style of presentation is that the reader can see how the part relates to the whole. The weakness of the style of presentation is that it is short on detail.

Westminster theologians could feel a little aggrieved by the suggestion that they need to recover the meaning of baptism and defend themselves by drawing attention to how the traditional theological encyclopaedia has been presented. Some have ordered the presentation of doctrine because they have argued from theological considerations, while others have felt that the order of dealing with the theological corpus should have pedagogical concerns at its heart. In a typical presentation of systematic theology the person and work of Christ will have been dealt with in its place, and Westminster theologians might argue that that need not be repeated again in later sections that deal with for example, the Church, the sacraments and eschatology. To say everything, everywhere leads to confusion rather than clarity. It could be insisted that the more systematic the layout the more it leads to clarity and a better pedagogical outcome. Many have noted how difficult Torrance is to read and to grasp, so while his style of presentation relates one doctrine to another his style does not create a good learning experience for the reader. Some of the reactions to Torrance's presentation of baptism in the commission's reports, dealt with in Chapter Three, were from people who wanted to know why typical issues to do with baptism were not dealt with.⁷³⁵

In preparing a systematic theology it can be conceded that the treatment of baptism will not repeat the whole systematic theology, but in a treatment of baptism as a separate single topic it really ought to link baptism with the person and work of Christ. Torrance provides a master class in how this should be done. The meaning of baptism is not found in the rite itself, nor in the age of the recipient but in Christ. As

⁷³⁵ Church of Scotland, *Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism* (May 1956), p. 6.

Paul says in Romans Chapter 6, baptism is into Christ, being baptised into his death, buried with Christ and raised with Christ.

Not only have the limitations of the layout of systematic theology contributed to a neglect of the meaning of baptism, but the debate and dialogue with credo Baptists has contributed to an over preoccupation with producing the most robust argument for defending infant baptism.

One further objection to the appropriateness of using Torrance to provide any kind of an example for dealing with baptism is the fact that his project in the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism failed. Torrance, it could be argued, ignored the traditional covenantal arguments that have been used to provide a theological basis for infant baptism. Torrance's approach was so intent in linking baptism with his incarnational theology that even the problems that the commission were asked to deal with were given very little attention, and the case for infant baptism seems to rest on the fact that infant baptism serves to enhance the objective nature of baptism and removes any human subjective element. The fact that infant baptism is no longer the primary baptism in the Church of Scotland is not a reflection on Torrance's theology. The tide was already beginning to turn on this, and any attempt to maintain infant baptism as the primary form of baptism would have faced a severe challenge. In response to this, any argument for infant baptism being the primary baptism raises questions about the coherence of the arguments. The theology of circumcision and baptism is explained by the covenantal relationship involving the adult disciple. Both Torrance and the majority of Westminster theologians will explain baptism in terms of discipleship baptism and then just apply this to the infant. The step between explaining the doctrine of baptism in terms of adult discipleship and applying this to an infant raises some serious questions. Calvin followed this pattern and as previously indicated, Bavinck speaks of the confusion in Calvin and in the reformed tradition.⁷³⁶ A further factor which challenged the practice of infant baptism was the declining church population. There was a decline in infant baptisms and the church was having to think and deal with more discipleship baptisms.

In that climate of change it would have been difficult for any argument in favour of the primacy of infant baptism to succeed. So the failure of Torrance's argument is no reason for dismissing the contribution that he makes to the doctrine of baptism. However the failure to have his doctrine of baptism accepted by the Church of

⁷³⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*, 4, p. 470.

Scotland does raise some questions about Torrance's tactics. Torrance found himself isolated on the subject of baptism, and also taking on a greater project than was asked of him in the Special Commission on Baptism. While the church at large has benefited from a very full history and development of the doctrine of baptism, that was not really the issue that the commission was asked to deal with. The problem that was brought to the General Assembly related to the question, 'whose child could be baptised?' Clarity on the meaning of baptism was sought so that there could be a greater consistency in the practice across the presbyteries. Torrance provided a longer answer to a broader question. This possibly comes back to the matter of style of presentation. Torrance takes a holistic approach to every issue and this makes it difficult for Torrance to offer practical solutions.⁷³⁷ Since the issue was a practical issue on infant baptism, perhaps Torrance would have had a better hope of success if he had sought allies among those who believed that infant baptism was the primary form of baptism.

Torrance was isolated from those who believed in baptismal regeneration, from those who took a Zwinglian view and from those who were located in the instrumental category of baptism. From each of these three categories there were those who would defend the primary nature of infant baptism and who could have contributed to the debate on whose child should be baptised. In broadening the scope of what needed to be addressed Torrance lost a tactical battle. However, Torrance did not see that he was merely trying to solve the practical problems of the local presbyteries. Torrance had a wider audience in view as he clearly admits to the General Assembly as seen in Chapter Three.⁷³⁸ The ecumenical context and community as outlined in Chapter One was the wider audience being addressed by Torrance. The practical problem presented by a local presbytery to the General Assembly became an opportunity for Torrance to command the stage for ten years, contributing to the ecumenical debate on the sacraments. The ecumenical scene demanded the holistic overview approach to the sacraments that Torrance was so capable of giving. Torrance's work did not succeed either in the larger ecumenical

⁷³⁷ Anderson makes a case for Torrance as a Practical Theologian but admits that it took him 25 years to see how Torrance's theology related to practical theology. Ray S. Anderson, 'Reading T.F. Torrance as a Practical Theologian,' in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians In Dialogue With T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

⁷³⁸ Church of Scotland, *Verbatim Minutes of the General Assembly* (May 1956), p. 910.

scene, even though he claimed that the commission's work was being influential with that wider audience.⁷³⁹

A further cause of Torrance finding himself isolated is not just a complex style of presentation but what seems to be an almost esoteric approach. Many who seek to expound Torrance merely *re-present* him using his language and dense style. This is a barrier to hearing Torrance's unique voice and securing clarification of his radically different soteriological paradigm. Torrance is not alone in having a complex style, his mentor Barth is equally complex. From within the Westminster tradition two men, Van Til and Meredith Kline also brought new paradigms to the theological community, each writing in a complex style. Each of the four has something original and innovative to say, both challenging paradigms and introducing paradigm changes. Their creative minds want to communicate their densely packed ideas, with only one short life to communicate the implications of their new paradigm, and with little time to develop a more pedagogical method. It is left to the succeeding generations to unpack and establish the legacy of their systems.

Torrance's theology of baptism should not be dismissed simply because of a difficult style or because of the failure of his project. Even if the church does not embrace all that Torrance has to say on baptism, he has proven his worth and ministry to the church by the number of doctrines that he has put back on the agenda for a number of theological traditions.

5.4.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of Westminster's and Torrance's doctrine of Baptism?

Torrance has made a monumental contribution to the subject of baptism. In Chapter One it was shown how baptism has always been closely linked with soteriology, however, no one in the twentieth century appears to do this more consistently than Torrance. In so linking his doctrine of baptism with his soteriology Torrance concentrates on the meaning of baptism, which according to Orthodox scholar Schmemmann has been displaced in the history of the church. Schmemmann notes that in the past the sacrament of baptism was performed on the paschal night as an organic part of the great annual celebration of Easter.⁷⁴⁰ Both Schmemmann and Torrance share the same quest for the recovery of the meaning of baptism. Schmemmann finds the rediscovery of the meaning of baptism in the liturgy of Easter,

⁷³⁹ See discussion in Chapter Three.

⁷⁴⁰ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, p. 7.

whereas Torrance locates the meaning of baptism in the liturgy of Christmas. This focus on the meaning of baptism is the greatest strength of Torrance's doctrine of baptism and the reason why he should serve as an example to the church, and a reminder of what lies at the heart of baptism.

Both Westminster and Torrance share much in common in their doctrine of baptism, in particular their support for the practice of infant baptism. Given the move within traditionally reformed churches to a dual practice of adult baptism and infant baptism it is surprising that supporters of infant baptism from either view have not looked to each other for support. To those who support the practice of infant baptism it will be seen as a strength that both Westminster and Torrance provide a rationale for infant baptism. The fact that both views support an objective baptism strengthens the case for a passive infant baptism. Additionally the two views reject both baptismal regeneration and a symbolic baptism. Both views emphasise the grace of God in the objective baptism and central to the understanding is union with Christ. Westminster and Torrance carefully link their doctrine of baptism with their doctrine of salvation. The strength of both views is that the emphasis is placed not on what humanity does but rather on what God has done in Jesus Christ. The importance of incarnational solidarity is emphasised in both views.

While these themes are more pronounced in Torrance some have been more latent in Westminster theology and it is to some extent due to Torrance that these themes have received attention from Westminster theologians in the past four decades.

Torrance's objective baptism understood as Christ's vicarious baptism, one baptism common to Christ and the church, is an emphasis that Westminster should note. By allowing the emphasis to fall on the fact that baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant, Westminster can miss the important link that Torrance makes in what he describes as the stereoscopic aspect of baptism, namely the baptism at the Jordan in water and the Spirit, the baptism in blood upon the cross and the baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost. It is not to suggest that Westminster would deny this. In Chapter One the history of baptism was traced to demonstrate the link between soteriology and baptism. This is so for both Torrance and Westminster, but this can be seen more clearly in Torrance. Many discussions of baptism are designed to decide whether an infant or an adult should be baptised. Westminster develops the covenantal argument, but they do not make the close link that Torrance does with the incarnation and atonement. While Westminster has a different view of the atonement

nevertheless they can learn the importance of bringing out the connection with soteriology and Christology in their doctrine of baptism.

Further, on placing the emphasis upon an objective baptism, Torrance seeks to provide an explanation for the efficacy of baptism, where the efficacy is in Christ, in his vicarious baptism and his priestly ministry before the Father in heaven. However, simply to change the phrase and say the efficacy is not in baptism but in Christ does not solve the issue of how baptism or indeed Christ is efficacious for the recipient of baptism. The efficacy of Christ's person and work can be elevated to the *nth* degree and shifted around and given a different locus in the corpus of theology but as Calvin notes 'as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us.'⁷⁴¹

Torrance also explores the eschatological nature of baptism. This has been given some attention in recent times by a Westminster theologian⁷⁴² and this is yet a further example of Torrance raising themes which are rich in Torrance's theology yet hardly get a mention in Westminster's doctrine of baptism.

The weakness in Torrance's view of baptism is the new and novel soteriology with which he links baptism. Whether it is agreed that his soteriology is a weakness or not, it should be considered a weakness that Torrance did not clearly identify how his soteriology was different. Possibly one of the causes of the failure of Torrance to have his defence of infant baptism accepted in the Church of Scotland was the energy that he put into promoting his soteriology, and the relocation of baptism from within its covenant context to a context of incarnational redemption.

A weakness of both views arises in the area of the application of baptism. Not the application of the rite itself but in how baptism is related to the baptised being included in Christ and the role that baptism plays in this. The problem will be described here and addressed more fully later in the chapter. The weakness arises because the defenders of infant baptism tend to be vague when it comes to dealing specifically with this point. The view occupies the centre ground between baptismal regeneration and a symbolical view of baptism. Those presenting the instrumental view want to argue that it is more than symbolism but that it is not baptismal regeneration. If baptism is not a symbol or actual baptismal regeneration then what is

⁷⁴¹ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.1.1.

⁷⁴² Fesko, *Word, Water and Spirit*.

it? Baptismal regeneration is said to deliver the salvation that it represents. The issue of efficacy in this view is straightforward but there are other theological reasons why baptismal regeneration has been rejected by the majority of reformed theologians. The answer in the instrumental view is finely nuanced and sometimes so nuanced that it merely produces puzzlement. Many accounts of instrumental infant baptism leave the reader aware that an answer has not really been given. Bannerman recognises the difficulty,

We know, from revelation, that there is a promise of grace annexed to outward ordinances when rightly used; we know that in the external observances Christ meets with His people to bless them and to do them good; - but beyond this we do not know. The character, the measure, the amount of the blessing promised, - how it stands connected with the outward ordinance, and what is the extent and efficacy of the supernatural grace over and above the natural efficacy of the ordinance, - of all this we know nothing, because we have been told nothing.⁷⁴³

5.4.3 Competence of Each Tradition to Answer the Questions that Arise?

There are four pertinent questions that will be put to each tradition to test the competence of each view to address the issues raised. The questions are as follows:

1. What is the link between faith and baptism?
2. What is the link between regeneration and baptism?
3. What presumptions, if any, are made with regard to the baptised infant?
4. What value does the baptism of someone who turns away from the faith in later life have?

It must be recognised here that Torrance's theology has a rather shorter provenance than Westminster theology and that Westminster theology has had rather more theologians contend with these questions. This is both a strength and a weakness. The strength is that someone within Westminster will have thought about the question, while the weakness is the diversity of opinion that it offers.

1. What is the Link Between Faith and Baptism?

Torrance makes clear in his discussion of baptism that the meaning of baptism cannot be identified with either the church's act of baptising or with the human response. This human response includes the faith of the person baptised. This is

⁷⁴³ What Bannerman means by the natural efficacy is the moral influence that the ordinances have by merely participating in them. Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, p. 2.

because, for Torrance, baptism is an objective act of God in Jesus Christ. For Torrance, faith is not our faith but the faith of Christ on our behalf.⁷⁴⁴ Faith is the gift of sight to those who have been blinded by sin.

Westminster theology would agree with Torrance that faith is a gift of God. The tension arises when considering the human response. Westminster theologians use two terms to try and achieve the proper balance of preserving the Sovereignty of God and the part of the human response. They distinguish between the *ground* and *instrument* of baptism. Baptism is *grounded* in Christ's work alone, and is *instrumentally* received by faith alone. This balance guards against conceiving of faith as a work or that it is somehow meritorious. The entire efficacy is found in Christ alone, not at all in the human response. Humanity does not achieve salvation, they receive it.

Westminster theologians⁷⁴⁵ would agree with Torrance that baptism is really God's action, not a human work. God is the Baptizer; ultimately He may use the minister and the water as his agents, but it is his Spirit who does the work. God offers Christ and applies Christ through the instrument of baptism. Christ as he is offered in the sacrament is received with the outstretched and open hand of faith. Baptism is not a good work to earn Christ; Christ is a gift of grace which God grants to faith. Helm in his discussion of Calvin's view of faith and the assurance of faith says that 'When we turn to Barth, and remind ourselves that for Barth faith is the acknowledgement of what is already true, it is little wonder that he pays scant attention to the relation between faith and the assurance of faith.'⁷⁴⁶ It is not possible to probe the matter of faith and assurance⁷⁴⁷ here but merely to raise the issue that Westminster theologians understand faith as both a gift from a sovereign God and a human responsibility. Thorson in a critique of Kendall summarises how he understands faith in Calvin's theology.

Thus (1) while Calvin believed that faith is given by God, he did talk at times of faith as our responsibility. (2) He clearly defined faith as a kind of knowledge, but he also described it as a feeling of assurance. (3) Yes, faith was passive in all the important Reformation distinctives. But it was more active, and more like the faith of the later

⁷⁴⁴ Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, p. 100.

⁷⁴⁵ For example, Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 770.

⁷⁴⁶ Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 414.

⁷⁴⁷ Kendall insists that Calvin had an objective view of faith and assurance and that the more subjective element was introduced by the later Calvinists. R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Calvinists, than Kendall is willing to admit. Finally, (4) while Calvin surely did not require empirical deduction from the effects of faith and the Spirit, he certainly believed in the utility of such inferential reasoning for the doubting believer.⁷⁴⁸

It is this subjective aspect that was considered in Chapter Four that Torrance strives so vigorously to remove from his theology that creates a problem of eliminating human action.⁷⁴⁹ In Westminster theology baptism is a true baptism when it is combined by faith.⁷⁵⁰ Faith is a gift of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit the person is made willing and responds by faith. This exercise of faith can be some time after the baptism. When there is not the response of faith, then the rite of baptism was not a true sacrament. It is the subjective element of faith in the person that permits Calvin to explain the apparent inconsistency of the baptised person later turning away and never embracing the Christian faith. For Calvin, baptism is not a sacrament unless it is combined with faith. Therefore those who do not demonstrate faith have never received the sacrament of baptism. The area of human response is a problem area in Torrance's theology and in his doctrine of baptism, but this is also a problem in Westminster's doctrine of baptism. If faith needs to be present for a real baptism to occur, the fact that the infant has no faith is not resolved by the issue of timing. If the meaning of adult baptism is applied to infant baptism and if no faith is present does this render infant baptism meaningless?

The issue of applying the meaning of adult baptism to infant baptism has been addressed by Bavinck, Bannerman and Cunningham. Calvin develops his view of the sacraments for the believer and then attempts to apply this doctrine to infant baptism. Calvin deals with the sacraments in general before going on to discuss baptism and the Lord's supper. In the discussion of the sacraments in general Calvin stresses the importance of faith. The sacraments are viewed as an aid to faith. Calvin defines a sacrament as an outward sign that seals the promises that God has made thus sustaining faith. A sacrament in Calvin's view is never without a preceding promise.

⁷⁴⁸ S. Thorson, 'Tensions in Calvin's View of Faith: Unexamined Assumptions in R.T. Kendall's Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649,' *The Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 3 (1994), p. 424.

⁷⁴⁹ Molnar disagrees with this criticism but doesn't engage with the issue beyond restating Torrance's general theology. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, pp. 336-337.

⁷⁵⁰ 'Therefore let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace. But they avail and profit nothing unless received in faith.' Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.7.

The sacrament requires preaching to beget faith. The sacraments do not of themselves confirm faith, according to Calvin, but are seen as agencies of the Holy Spirit in association with the word. With reference to the unbeliever receiving the sacrament Calvin does not believe that this invalidates⁷⁵¹ the sacrament because the unbeliever does not receive the sacrament by faith. Calvin is clearly developing his theology of the sacraments for the individual who is enabled by the Holy Spirit to understand preaching and respond with believing faith where such faith is a gift of God. The development of the argument assumes one who is of sufficient age and ability to exercise faith and to have a cognitive understanding of the promises made. This ability to exercise faith and understand is entirely aided by the Holy Spirit. Calvin develops his doctrine of baptism for the adult believer and then attempts to apply this doctrine to infants. This has led to speculation on what kind of faith or 'seed of faith' the infant might have or if the infant has already been regenerated in the womb. In an extended debate between Evans⁷⁵² and Lusk,⁷⁵³ they have argued about the 'latent efficacy' of infant baptism or the 'latent faith' of the infant. They are attempting to reconcile this discussion of the doctrine of adult baptism with the doctrine of infant baptism. Cunningham says that

when the subject of the sacraments in general ... is under consideration, it is usually assumed that the persons who partake of them are possessed of the necessary preliminary qualifications; and, more particularly, that when statements are made upon this subject which are applied equally to baptism and the Lord's Supper, or when the general object and design of baptism and the Lord's Supper are set forth in the abstract, it is adult participation only which theologians have ordinarily in view, - the participation of those who, after they have grown up to years of understanding, desire to hold communion with the visible church of Christ.⁷⁵⁴

With regards to the practice of infant baptism Cunningham remarks, 'It tends greatly to introduce obscurity and confusion into our whole conceptions upon the subject of

⁷⁵¹ Grislis considers the consistency of Calvin's explanation of unbelievers receiving the sacraments and his view on the instrumentality of the sacraments. Grislis, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Baptism.'

⁷⁵² Evans, 'Calvin, Baptism, and Latent Efficacy Again'.

⁷⁵³ Rich Lusk, 'Baptismal Efficacy and Baptismal Latency: A Sacramental Dialogue,' *Presbyterion* 32, no. 1 (2006).

⁷⁵⁴ Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, p. 125.

baptism, that we see it ordinarily administered to infants, and very seldom to adults.⁷⁵⁵

Bannerman speaks approvingly of a general consideration of the sacraments before dealing with the individual sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. Of the sacraments in general he says, 'It is carefully to be noted that they presuppose or imply the possession of grace in the case of those who partake of them.'⁷⁵⁶

Bannerman views infant baptism as a special case. 'The case of *infant* Baptism, which is ... in some respects exceptional, and not to be taken as completely bringing out the full and primary idea of the Sacrament.'⁷⁵⁷ Bannerman develops his doctrine of baptism by considering believers' baptism.

Baptism is a means for confirming the faith of the believer and adding to the grace which he possessed before. It is not intended for the benefit or conversion of unconverted men; it is not designed or fitted to impart justification or spiritual grace to those who were previously strangers to these; but it is made a means of grace by the Spirit to those who are believers already, and fitted and intended to promote their spiritual good.⁷⁵⁸

As Bannerman defends the practice of infant baptism he acknowledges that there is a problem in relating believers' baptism to the exceptional case of the infant,

(I)f Baptism be the seal of a federal transaction between the party baptized and Christ; if this be the main and characteristic feature of the ordinance; and if a religious profession be a prerequisite to its reception; it would appear as if there were no small difficulty in the way of admitting to the participation of it those who, by reason of nonage, can be no parties to the engagement in virtue of their own act or will.⁷⁵⁹

Old in his study of sixteenth century baptismal liturgy notes how the baptismal liturgies were written with an adult in mind and then changed to reflect the fact that fewer 'pagans' were being converted and that the practice of infant baptism comprised the majority of baptisms.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, p. 12.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

⁷⁶⁰ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), p. 6.

Bannerman puts forward the same case for infant baptism as Bavinck. The only reason for the infant of the believer to be baptised is not related to faith but depends solely upon the covenant of grace. '[T]he covenant of grace, as revealed by God at different periods for the salvation of His people, has been essentially the same in former and in later times, and has always comprehended infants within it.'⁷⁶¹

The same issue of timing arises when considering the link between regeneration and baptism.

2. What is the Link between Regeneration and Baptism?

Torrance might well render the question about the link between regeneration and baptism an illegitimate question arising from an embedded commitment to dualism. While there are extreme forms of dualism that must be rejected, Torrance tends to use this criticism in a rather general way and at times this blunt instrument leads to a dismissal of questions and objections and prevents any further engagement. The weakness in Torrance's doctrine of baptism is in this area of the subjective aspect of how humanity participates in the redemption that has been accomplished. Torrance's answer to this question is to refer to the vicarious response of Christ. For Torrance, Christ was vicariously born of the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb. In Westminster theology there is a close link between baptism and regeneration. Regeneration is a work carried out by the Holy Spirit in applying the redemption that Christ accomplished. This is where the Holy Spirit sovereignly works in the passive person. The work of redemption, an event accomplished in history, is now applied to the person. Because of what the Holy Spirit does, the person is enabled to respond in faith and repentance. What God sovereignly works in naturally works itself out in the subjective response of the individual.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit the person is brought into union with Christ and all the benefits of salvation flow from union with Christ.

It is in this area where Torrance is not clear. Torrance's preference is not to use the term 'applied' preferring to use the term 'actualised'.⁷⁶² However changing the terminology and treating the human response as already accomplished in Christ still leaves Torrance's theology having to account for how salvation is not just something done outside a person.

⁷⁶¹ Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, p. 68.

⁷⁶² 'It is through the Spirit that we receive and apprehend the self-revelation of God in Christ, and through the Spirit that the reconciling work of Christ is actualised within us so that we are restored in Christ to the Father, calling upon Him and acknowledged by Him as His beloved sons.', Torrance, *The School of Faith*, p. xcvi.

It is not that Torrance makes no attempt to address the person's incorporation into Christ, he speaks of Christ's union with his people and his people's union with Christ, although he does not view these as two unions. However this does not advance the idea of what 'actualised' means. The issue is no less a problem in Westminster theology. Some Westminster theologians⁷⁶³ speak of the possibility of an infant being regenerate in the mother's womb citing the example of John the Baptist leaping in the womb as Elizabeth responds to Mary. They also say that regeneration can take place before, at the time of the baptism or later. Again when the meaning of baptism is applied to the infant this does not make sense and the timing issue of when regeneration takes place does not solve the problem. It would seem that neither Torrance nor Westminster have removed this confusion.

3. What Presumptions, if any, are made with Regard to the Baptised Infant?

Torrance makes no presumption about the existence of faith or regeneration in the baptised infant, and he is persuaded that no one can make any such presumption. In fact, for Torrance, any assessment of any accomplishment or activity within either the adult or the infant is as a result of the misplaced focus on the recipient of baptism rather than the central meaning of baptism which is centred in Christ. Nevertheless there is a presumption implicit in Torrance's theology of baptism. Torrance presumes that the infant is in ontological union with Christ. Torrance takes an objective view on this because his focus is not on the infant but on Christ. Issues related to regeneration, repentance or faith do not arise in Torrance's theology of baptism because he believes that Christ has already made a vicarious response on behalf of the infant.

In Westminster theology there is a spectrum of views about what is presumed of the infant. Virtually all Westminster theologians agree that the infant of a believing parent is a child of the covenant of grace and that the child should receive the sign and seal of the covenant. The difference arises when the spiritual status of the infant is considered. Leahy represents the opinion that makes no presumption about the infant.

We are not suggesting that covenant children are to be regarded as believers until they grow up and reject the

⁷⁶³ For example, Douglas Wilson, 'Baptism and Children: Their Place in the Old and New Testaments', in ed. Gregg Strawbridge, *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), p. 287.

Gospel. ... We cannot and dare not presume the regeneration of our infants, although we may and should pray, even before they are born, that God will regenerate them according to His Sovereign purpose.⁷⁶⁴

Leahy goes on to suggest what this should mean for the spiritual nurture of the child. The child is to be nurtured in a godly family and in the church and when the child reaches the years of understanding they will either become a covenant-keeper or covenant-breaker. Bromiley expresses a similar view but is more explicit than Leahy. Bromiley says of covenant children,

From the very beginning they are in the sphere of the word and the Spirit, and the prayer of parents and congregation is made for them. They are not necessarily converted, and baptism itself will not convert them, but the gospel promises are before them and every reason exists to believe that the Holy Spirit has begun his work within them.⁷⁶⁵

Speaking of the later conversion of the baptised infant Bromiley says of covenant children, 'They are to die and rise again with Christ in personal repentance and faith, and are to begin the outworking of their renewal in conversion.'⁷⁶⁶

Other Westminster theologians⁷⁶⁷ will presume that the infant is regenerate and that the child should be nurtured as a believer and that it would be wrong to subject the child to any form of evangelistic message. Schenck⁷⁶⁸ presents the history of infant baptism in American Presbyterianism and draws attention to different viewpoints on how the covenant child should be nurtured. Schenck advocates a 'presumptive regeneration' view of the infant of a believing parent. Schenck's work originally published in 1940 was reprinted in 2003 and offered to American Presbyterians to warn them of the dangers of subjecting covenant children to evangelistic messages. Between the two views represented by Leahy and Schenck there is a spectrum of views expressed in the attempt to describe the spiritual status of the covenant child. Many Westminster theologians would appreciate the sentiment of

⁷⁶⁴ Frederick S. Leahy, *Biblical Baptism* (Belfast: Cameron Press, 1992), p. 31.

⁷⁶⁵ Bromiley, *Children of Promise*, p. 80.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁷⁶⁷ Lewis Bevens Schenck, *The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant: An Historical Study of the Significance of Infant Baptism in the Presbyterian Church* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003).

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Schenck's view but would be more cautious in how they described the status and nurture of a covenant child.⁷⁶⁹

Torrance's doctrine of baptism avoids this kind of debate but because the two paradigms undergirding both views of baptism are different, the paradigms do not engage with each other on the issue of presumption. It is interesting to note a similarity between Torrance and Bavinck here in their defence of infant baptism. Torrance only presupposes what lies at the heart of his soteriological paradigm – incarnational union, and Bavinck only presupposes what lies at the heart of his paradigm – the covenant of grace. Torrance would view the Westminster debate here as merely typical of the kind of problems that arise because of wrong theological assumptions about Christology and Soteriology.

4. What Value does the Baptism of Someone who Turns Away from the Faith in Later Life Have?

This is a question that would not arise in Torrance's theology of baptism. That a baptised child would not continue in the faith is as irrational as evil and therefore a question that cannot be addressed. In Westminster theology, Westminster theologians would explain that the person who turned away from the faith is not of the elect, and therefore did not receive the sacrament of baptism, but merely the outward rite.⁷⁷⁰

However, there are a growing number of Westminster theologians influenced by Meredith Kline⁷⁷¹ who will view that each covenant child receives covenant baptism and will receive either the blessings or cursings of the covenant. The person who continues in the faith receives the blessings of the covenant and the person who turns away is a covenant breaker and is subject to the curse of the covenant.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁹ Bryan Chapell, 'A Pastoral Overview of Infant Baptism' in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003).

⁷⁷⁰ Marcel views the rejection of the covenant promises as an act of rebellion. Pierre Ch. Marcel, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, trans. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1953), p. 136.

⁷⁷¹ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1967).

⁷⁷² Fesko, *Word, Water and Spirit*; Horton, *The Christian Faith*; Marcel views the breaking of the covenant as an act of wilful rebellion. Pierre Ch. Marcel, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, trans. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1981), p. 136.

5.4.4 To what Extent is a Synthesis Possible?

Since Westminster's view of soteriology is paradigmatically different to Torrance's view of soteriology a synthesis is not possible.⁷⁷³ However, the example Torrance has set in his Christ centred doctrine of baptism can be used to recover the meaning of baptism in Westminster theology. Typical presentations on the subject of baptism do not show the commitment that Torrance does to understand baptism as centred in Christ. It is not that these theologians disagree with the link with Christ, it is that the discussion around the doctrine of baptism is centred around the dispute about issues like the mode of baptism, the candidate for baptism, the covenant and issues related to baptismal regeneration, symbolism or instrumentalism. Where these are made the chief concerns, the meaning of baptism as it is linked to what Torrance has called the stereoscopic view of baptism gets lost.

In response to Torrance's criticism of Westminster's theology being based in external relations, Westminster can respond by developing more clearly the relational aspect of the covenant. Torrance also raises the awareness of the importance of the incarnation. Westminster can respond by emphasising the importance of the incarnation as it relates to covenant solidarity and union with Christ.

5.5 The Meaning of Baptism in Reformed Theology

A reformed doctrine of baptism that reflects the example of Torrance will now be sketched in outline form. This outline will also indicate where it differs from Torrance. It will require a project beyond this one to flesh out the details.

The meaning of baptism is grounded in the person and work of Christ. The Son of God is the Christ of the Covenant of Grace. The person of Christ is not the work of Christ, but the work of Christ is not separated from his person, because the work of Christ is what it is because of the person of Christ. Christ is the mediator, the God-man between God and humanity. In the Word becoming flesh God became human. The truth of the incarnation is essential because in God becoming human he brought humanity into a universal union, a solidarity with humanity. This union while essential was not redemptive. It was essential so that Christ might enter into covenantal solidarity with those he came to redeem.

Adam had stood as covenantal representative in the prelapsarian covenant of creation. This was a gracious covenant where the blessings of the covenant were

⁷⁷³ Vander Zee's presentation of baptism has incorporated a number of Torrance's themes on baptism. However, Torrance would disapprove of the opening chapter entitled 'The Restoration of a Sacramental Universe in the Sacrament of Christ.' Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*.

freely given by God; the enjoyment of the fruits of creation were communion with God and the promise of eternal life. Adherence to the stipulations of the covenant did not earn the blessings but in obedience to the stipulations Adam could demonstrate his love and submission to God. The stipulations of the covenant were obedience to God and as sign of that obedience Adam was to abstain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The curse for breaking the covenant was physical, spiritual and eternal death. Adam broke that covenant, and the curse that he incurred resulted in a marred image of God, an acquired fallen nature, and because he was left a sinner and estranged from God he could no longer represent humanity, because he could not stand in the presence of God. If there was to be hope, only a sinless human being could stand before God as covenant representative. The love, wisdom and grace of the triune God is seen in that God in the person of the Son of God condescends and God becomes a human in order that he might represent humanity back to himself. The Son of God became a human through the virgin birth, through the virgin Mary and by the Holy Spirit not inheriting the sin of a father, coming as sinless humanity that he might be the sinless human standing as covenant representative in the covenant of grace. The incarnation was not redemptive, no ontological healing was required because fallen humanity was still human and humanity still reflected the image of a relational triune God. The human condition was a relationship now defiled through a broken covenant, and as a result humanity was estranged in a triad of relationships. Humanity was estranged from God, estranged from their fellow humanity and estranged from the creation. The importance of the *homoousion* and the *hypostatic union*, so drawn to the church's attention by Torrance, is that it might be understood that the Word made flesh in the incarnation is true God and true human, two natures in the one person. This was essential that he might covenantally represent God and humanity, so that he could bring God to humanity and humanity to God, and God-man that he might be the covenant representative between God and humanity.

Christ is the covenant representative of the new covenant and baptism is the sign and seal of the new covenant. As covenant representative the life of Christ was lived in obedience to the law of God referred to as the active obedience of Christ. In Christ's vicarious death Christ bore the curse of the covenant, his passive obedience. Christ did not win God's love for his people; it was because of God's love that Christ came and took the curse of the covenant upon himself. Because Christ was in

covenant solidarity with humanity, was God come in flesh, he died for his people and was buried and raised for them and intercedes for his people. All the covenant blessings of Christ are not separated from Christ but are enjoyed in union with Christ. In Christ the believer is justified and sanctified, these two blessings flow from being in union with Christ. The believer is declared to be righteous because of a righteousness that is not his or her own and through regeneration the Holy Spirit writes God's law upon the heart to cause the believer to want to do things God's way. The fruit of regeneration by the Holy Spirit is seen in faith and repentance and the fruit of the new life is obedience to Christ. Obedience does not cause new life but is evidence of new life. The redemption accomplished by Christ is applied by the Holy Spirit, in giving a new life where there once was death, transforming the believer into a new creation in Christ, to live a life of progressive sanctification in union with Christ developing in spiritual communion with Christ, and as part of the body of Christ feeding upon Christ through the preaching of the Word, participating in a corporate liturgy and in the Lord's supper. Worship is a spiritual human response and thanksgiving, but that spiritual worship is in Christ, as Christ in the midst of his people, and as divine song singer sings over and through his people. The singing and the prayers and the human response are mediated through Christ as high priest in heaven.

The new creation, in broad terms, describes the making of a disciple and the importance of the person and work of Christ can be seen in that discipleship making. The Holy Spirit through regeneration brings the person into spiritual union with Christ because the universal ontological union while necessary for covenantal solidarity is not sufficient to accomplish redemption. The work of Christ is objective and carried out vicariously in covenant solidarity with his people. While that remains outside of us it does us no good but what was accomplished on our behalf is applied by the Holy Spirit. It is this act of making a disciple that is so closely related to baptism.

It is also important to consider Christ's vicarious baptism. He was baptised in the river Jordan in covenant solidarity with his people. He had a baptism to be baptised with which was the death on the cross, burial in the tomb and resurrection from the dead. He ascended as God-man as the forerunner for his people, opening the way for his people to come and enjoy the fellowship of the triune God. While still on earth his people enjoy already that communion and fellowship, but because they are still on

earth the fullness of that communion awaits the coming again of Christ when the full blessings of the covenant will be realised, and God will be their God and they will be his people. This shows the eschatological aspect of his baptism. Christ's birth, his life, his death, his ascension his coming again is his baptism and his people are baptised into the name, into the person and work of Christ. The spoils of Christ's baptism are shared with his people as they are brought into the good of the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the church on the Day of Pentecost.

This work of Christ is an objective work, an objective baptism, no-one can add to that. That objective vicarious baptism is applied by the Holy Spirit as he makes a person a disciple bringing them into union with Christ.

The normal means that the Holy Spirit uses are the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. The Christ who is received through the Word is the same Christ who is received in baptism and baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant. Through baptism the Holy Spirit applies redemption to his people. This theology is worked out and explained in discipleship baptism. This is the primary baptism and infant baptism is derived from this. The theology of infant baptism like discipleship baptism is set in the context of covenant. God promised that the blessings of the covenant were for the disciples and their children. When a person is made a disciple they accept the terms of the covenant that their covenant representative Christ accepted. Christ was obedient to God and Christ is acknowledged by God as covenant Lord. As the person is made a disciple they receive all the covenant blessings in Christ and they acknowledge obedience to God as Christ their covenant representative did and they acknowledge Christ as Lord. The human response does not earn anything but is merely the fruit or outworking of what God has worked in. As the disciple comes to God they come as covenant representative of their own family, those already born and those yet unborn. Having been brought into covenant the parent has obtained freely from God the blessings of the covenant, has yielded up obedience to God and acknowledged Christ as Lord. Every child born to that parent is heir to that covenant and as such receives the sign and seal of the covenant. To be obedient to the terms of that covenant and receive the blessings of the covenant that child must surrender obedience to God, as their parent before them, and acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. If the infant grows and embraces the terms of the covenant it will be through the Sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. If they turn away from the terms of the covenant that child will bear the curse of the covenant as a covenant breaker. In this

way infant baptism has a covenant reality associated with it; a baptism of promise but with the possibility of curse. Just as the preaching of the Gospel holds out both the possibility of blessing and judgement, so too the Gospel sacrament of baptism contains both these elements.

This outline has sought to sketch a reformed view of baptism that not only learns from Torrance's example but also embraces some of the emphases that Torrance has drawn attention to. But in addition, taking the lead from Bavinck, Cunningham and Bannerman, has taken discipleship baptism as the primary baptism and infant baptism as derivative thus removing the confusion of attempting to apply the theology of discipleship baptism to infant baptism.

Chapter Six - Conclusions: Is There a Torrance Legacy on the Subject of Baptism?

Torrance's doctrine of baptism is shaped by his incarnational theology influenced by his teacher, Karl Barth. Revelation, union with Christ, the benefits of Christ all depend upon the incarnation and cannot be known without the incarnation, according to Torrance. Through his incarnational theology Torrance raises two main points about baptism. First, the focus on the meaning of baptism centred on the one baptism of Christ for the church, and second, what Torrance describes as 'a dimension in depth' to be considered in baptism. By this phrase 'dimension in depth' Torrance has two things in mind. First, that baptism relates to the whole incarnational event from the virgin birth to the ascension and coming again of Christ and second, the atonement takes place in the person of Christ, so that the work of Christ is the person of Christ and can be thought of as an ontological healing.

The early part of the thesis has been expository beginning with the general and specific influences that help shape the doctrine of baptism. Three categories of baptism were identified, baptismal regeneration, symbolism and instrumentalism. An examination of the literature still reflects the fact that these categories continue to be debated. Torrance sees the muddle, confusion and lack of agreement on the subject of baptism to be down to an embedded dualism in church thinking. A faulty dualism, that places attention on the water rite or the recipient of baptism rather than Christ, to whom the rite refers. It was not an innovation that Torrance sought to link his doctrine of baptism with his soteriology as this was in line with what most theologians do. However the question of innovation with Torrance has to be addressed. Can his doctrine of ontological healing be found in the early church fathers or Calvin, or is this an innovation belonging to Barth and Torrance? The answer to this question is not so straightforward a matter because Torrance claims both a heritage and an innovation. On the innovation side he says that Barth's theology is a Copernican revolution. He is at pains in his personal correspondence with Barth to stress the new insight of *baptisma* over *baptismos*. However on the heritage side Torrance seeks to find his teaching in both the early church fathers and Calvin. Careful examination of Torrance's use of the fathers found that some of the seeds of his ideas are there but that Torrance has creatively developed these ideas. Further research could be carried out to establish the degree to which Torrance creatively uses the church fathers. The same can also be said for his use of Calvin.

Further work could help to clarify Torrance's use and development of Calvin. This thesis concludes that there is more innovation than heritage in Torrance. To demonstrate innovation does not demonstrate that a view is in error. Both Torrance and Westminster can find the themes and seeds for their ideas in the early church fathers and Calvin. The burden of the thesis is to establish, particularly in the doctrine of baptism, that Torrance is different. It is important to demonstrate this because it helps cast light on why Torrance continues to be ignored on the subject of baptism. His writing style is complex and he compresses too much into a sentence for it to be pedagogically helpful. But this alone cannot explain why he is ignored. His other work has captured attention, as the amount of published research on Torrance demonstrates. Traditionally all three categories of baptism linked baptism with a soteriology that was associated with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Within reformed theology this soteriology was undergirded by a covenantal paradigm. Torrance replaced this covenantal paradigm with an incarnational paradigm. Torrance radically changes the received thinking on the nature of the human predicament, the nature of the atonement and the association of baptism with the atonement. It was this new paradigm that Torrance brought to the ten year debate in the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism. Those with liberal, reformed or evangelical theological convictions expected the usual arguments to settle the question of whose child should be baptised. Instead the commission's work became an occasion for a professor of theology to teach a new paradigm. To learn a new paradigm when it is expected is a difficult task but to detect a new paradigm when it is not expected is even more difficult. Even further, to assimilate the nuances of a different paradigm into an accepted paradigm produces many feelings of incredulity. Criticisms of the accepted paradigm, because of how it fails to fit with the newly offered paradigm, create a sense of bewilderment.

This thesis has sought to identify the two paradigms and to acknowledge Torrance's criticism of the Westminster paradigm. The conviction is that a clear statement of each paradigm, an acknowledgement of what each paradigm is and an awareness that it is not possible for either paradigm to defeat the other would provide a useful advance towards dialogue between those who hold these paradigms. It will have been evident that the author is not neutral, as clearly identified by the title of the thesis. Having identified Torrance's paradigm the issue was how can Torrance help Westminster theology recover the meaning of baptism?

The main concern of this thesis has been to establish two clear voices for both Torrance and Westminster theologians rather than provide a critique of Torrance's theology. There is no real dialogue taking place between Torrance's followers and Westminster theologians. There are some shoots of a meaningful dialogue beginning to emerge in certain quarters.⁷⁷⁴ However Torrance's description of Westminster theology continues to be the main diet for the understanding of Westminster theology. Torrance's followers continue to use Torrance's caricature of Westminster theology. This is not helpful to Torrance's followers because they continue attack a theology that does not and may never have existed. Torrance and Torrance's followers have serious points to make but they will never be heard because they are too easily dismissed by Westminster theologians because they do not recognise the version of Westminster theology that Torrance describes. This robs Westminster theologians of the opportunity to pay attention to the useful criticism that Torrance has made about their neglect of certain major doctrines. Since Torrance's criticism of Westminster theology is so wide of the mark, he is dismissed as having nothing relevant to say. This thesis serves as an appeal to both sides to look again. For Torrance's followers to listen to what Westminster theology is really saying and for Westminster theology to engage in some thoughtful reflection on Torrance's criticism about their neglect of major doctrines.

In order to facilitate a meaningful dialogue this thesis has sought to establish two clearer voices: what is Torrance really saying and what are Westminster theologians really saying. In order to establish Torrance's voice this thesis has identified that Torrance's view is not securely rooted in the early church fathers or in Calvin. If a theological legacy is to be established for Torrance then some agreement is necessary on the level of indebtedness he has to both the early church fathers and the degree to which he develops their theology. It would be wrong to say that Torrance has no connection with either church fathers or Calvin but it is also true that Torrance in seeking to establish his theological paradigm has exaggerated the connection.

Few Westminster theologians would recognise themselves in Torrance's description and critique of their theology. Some of Torrance's detailed criticism of Westminster theology is easily dismissed. It has been important to respond and critique this aspect of Torrance as a limited and minor aspect of the thesis in order to

⁷⁷⁴ Habets and Grow, (eds) *Evangelical Calvinism*.

establish a clearer voice for Westminster theology. The thesis is merely asserting that Torrance is wrong in his description of Westminster theology and is not attempting to say that he is wrong in his theology. That would require a further project. The limited outcome of the thesis is to arrive at a point where Torrance's followers and Westminster theologians will agree on what Torrance is saying in his theological paradigm and what Westminster theologians are saying in theirs, and what impact this has on the dialogue on baptism.

Throughout the thesis each theology has been described as a paradigm. This was to draw attention to the conceptual difference that exists between the two theologies. Torrance's theology is radically different to Westminster theology. His theology presents a radically different view of the nature of the human predicament, the nature of the atonement, the union that humanity has with Christ and therefore the doctrine of baptism will be radically different in each case.

Some problems arise in discussion and engagement when the differences are treated as less than paradigmatic differences. When Torrance's criticism of Westminster theology are seen in the context of the traditional polemics associated with the atonement then they fail to grasp the radical view that Torrance has on the atonement. When Torrance speaks of ontological change taking place he is not speaking of a level of intensity of the change that is required because sin is so offensive to God, he is using the term in the sense of being and non-being. When Torrance says that the Westminster view of the atonement is a transactional view that does not make any change to the person, Westminster theology is inclined to respond that Torrance does not take into consideration the change that is made through sanctification. But this is to misunderstand what Torrance is saying about atonement. Torrance views that what is required in the atonement is the reversal of the human drift towards non-being. This is more than just a spiritual or moral problem for Torrance, it has to do with the change that is required at the level of being. Torrance's view of the atonement is not merely stressing the active and passive obedience of Christ in his life and on the cross but rather in the incarnation God healed humanity through Christ in taking our humanity and healing our humanity in the person that Christ became. As this theology is misunderstood so it adds to the confusion on how Torrance's doctrine of baptism is understood.

Torrance has placed a number of neglected doctrines back on the church's agenda. His voice has been heard on the trinity, the incarnation, union with Christ, and a

Calvinistic view of the Lord's supper. Those engaged in considering these topics may not embrace all that Torrance has had to say, but some credit is due to Torrance for the fact that these topics are now receiving attention.

Torrance also drew attention to the fact that the Westminster theology had lost its focus on the subject of baptism. Torrance worked in many areas over his lifetime and perhaps it will take time for his voice to be heard on each subject but to date his voice on baptism has received little attention. A quick browse of the publications on baptism reveals that Torrance does not even receive a footnote. This is odd given the prominence of Torrance as a theologian, the vast volume of work generated in the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism and the ecumenical activity that he was involved in. For those who have embraced his incarnational theology, Christ's descent and ascent in baptism is an ideal analogy for the whole of Torrance's theology. Even if Torrance's followers do not want to accept his emphasis on infant baptism, with minor adjustment everything that Torrance has said could be applied to discipleship baptism. Paedobaptists, in the absence of an emphasis on covenant theology, would have to reflect on how infant baptism can be seen as derivative in his theology. For those who do not embrace Torrance's incarnational theology, the ontological healing and the combining of the person and work of Christ there are still many lessons to learn. The major lesson from Torrance is to reset the attention of baptism in the person and work of Christ. The importance of the incarnation, the objective nature of baptism, Christ's vicarious baptism, the active obedience of Christ and the eschatological nature of baptism are aspects of Torrance's doctrine of baptism that should be given a place in the doctrine of baptism. Torrance's holistic approach could be followed in seeing Christ's baptism as everything from his birth to his ascension with the fulfilment of the promises of baptism giving the eschatological context.

It is useful to reflect briefly on why Torrance found it necessary to apply his incarnational theology to the doctrine of baptism. The occasion certainly presented itself because of the ecumenical interest in the sacraments. But beyond the opportunity to enter the debate Torrance sensed, along with Barth, that the traditional debate, in Barth's words to Torrance, merely produced a fog of questions. Many traditionally reformed discussions of baptism begin by describing the sacraments in general and then go on to deal with the two particular sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. The description of the sacraments in general and the two particular

sacraments are usually developed in relation to the adult believer. Calvin follows this pattern. The sacrament of baptism is closely associated with the faith of the believer and the doctrine of regeneration. This appears to be straight forward until it comes to applying this to infant baptism. In the development of the doctrine of baptism the adult believer is the primary consideration. As this doctrine is then made to fit the practice of infant baptism the issues of how faith relates to the infant, or how regeneration relates to the infant become matters of debate. Solutions offered are that faith associated with the infant is the faith of the church, or the parents, or the sponsors, or the infant has the 'seed' of faith implanted in them, or that the infant has 'latent faith'. Related to regeneration, there will be those who will presume that the infant is regenerate. Some will refer to the exceptional case of John the Baptist's reaction in his mother's womb and argue that because God can do this that he must do this as the norm for every covenant child. This leads further to a debate about the nurture of a child and the type of teaching the child should receive – should covenant children be evangelised? It was this lacuna in the reformed doctrine of baptism that added to the consternation in Barth's thinking on baptism and eventually led him to reject infant baptism. However Torrance believed that he could use the objective theology of Barth to take the emphasis away from the focus on the infant, faith and regeneration and place that emphasis on Christ, thus avoiding these type of questions, that he believed arose from faulty premises. Torrance shifted the focus away from both the adult and the infant and placed the focus on Christ.

Torrance's followers have yet to make known whether they are prepared to accept his teaching on baptism and defence of infant baptism, or whether this will be Torrance's 'Cinderella' doctrine. In this thesis, while one of the fundamental planks of Torrance's dimension in depth has not been embraced, his legacy to the church on the subject of baptism should not be understated.

It is a considerable achievement to say to the church and be heeded, that they have lost the focus, or have misplaced focus on a major doctrine. Torrance has been more successful in doing this with the doctrines of the trinity, union with Christ, the Lord's supper and the incarnation than he has been with baptism. Torrance accuses the church of losing the focus on the meaning of baptism. A cursory glance at the literature on baptism will make clear that Torrance has not yet been heard on this subject, but the literature will also reveal how frequently the debate is preoccupied with issues related to the status of the infant. It is no small task to cause the church to

think again about the importance of the meaning of baptism. Torrance's answers to the Church of Scotland General Assembly as convenor of the Special Commission on Baptism indicated the sense of frustration that Torrance had as he tried to shift the focus away from the usually debated issues and to think about the greater meaning of baptism itself, as centred in Christ. A further sense of frustration experienced by Torrance was related to the questions asked at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland about those who participated in the commission's work. The allegation was made that all views in the Church of Scotland were not represented on the commission (See discussion in Chapter Three). Torrance replied that those with different views had been invited to take part but declined.

While Torrance's doctrine of baptism is unlikely to be embraced by Westminster theologians there are two major purposes that his doctrine of baptism can serve for Westminster, one negative and the other positive. Negatively, Torrance's doctrine of baptism can serve as a lens through which the Westminster doctrine can be viewed. This can help Westminster stand back from their usual debate to assess why the debate about infant faith, and presumed regeneration of the infant, or not, first arose. Torrance was critical of the Westminster debate and believed that many of the issues arose because of faulty assumptions. While this thesis does not advocate Torrance's complete solution it does agree that Torrance has highlighted a problem that needs addressing.

Torrance also has a positive contribution to make to Westminster's view of baptism. Torrance links the meaning of baptism with the person and work of Christ. Torrance stresses the vicarious nature of Christ's baptism that embraces the whole incarnational event up to and including the second advent. Torrance draws attention to the eschatological view of baptism which remains an important aspect of baptism that requires further development. Torrance also alluded to the judgement aspect of baptism, again a subject left undeveloped in his thinking.

It is interesting that there is a similarity in the methodology used by Torrance and Bavinck in their defence of infant baptism. Torrance's paradigm was based on incarnational union with Christ and based on the assumption of that paradigm Torrance argued that the passive nature of infant baptism best illustrated the objective nature of baptism. Bavinck's paradigm was based on the covenant of grace and he argued that the basis for baptism was the covenant of grace.

Resolution of the problems associated with the discussion on infant faith and presumed regeneration were addressed with reference to the approach of Bavinck, Bannerman and Cunningham. Placing the focus on the meaning of baptism as centred in Christ was addressed by incorporating Torrance's emphasis on Christ and the vicarious baptism of Christ.

Chapter One located Torrance's baptism in the instrumental category of baptism along with the Westminster view, noting that the term 'instrumental' caused as many problems for Westminster as it did for Torrance. The instrumental view was loosely described as something more than symbolism but something less than baptismal regeneration. It was also noted how each view of baptism was closely related to soteriology. The lesson from Torrance's treatment of baptism is how rigorously he connects baptism to his soteriology and in so doing places the emphasis on the meaning of baptism.

The ecumenical movement provided a stage for Torrance to promote his theology of baptism and the liturgical renewal movement provided Torrance with opportunity to have his incarnational theology reflected in the worship of the church. The outline of Barth's theology demonstrates how influential Barth's treatment of baptism was on Torrance. However Torrance demonstrates his independence from Barth as he uses the incarnational redemption paradigm to provide an argument in favour of a sacramental infant baptism.

In Chapter Two Torrance's baptism was described in order to identify his particular theological paradigm. Material from his published and yet unpublished works on baptism were used.

Chapter three then explored the history of the Church of Scotland's Special Commission on Baptism. That survey helps to explain why Torrance's doctrine of baptism is ignored today. It is evident from some of the reaction to the reports at the General Assembly that some were left puzzled why traditional topics on baptism were not discussed. From the correspondence with Barth it is clear that even Barth misunderstood what Torrance was saying. After ten years of investment of intellectual energy, Torrance's arguments did not succeed. However, Torrance's theology did have an influence on the *1994 Common Order of the Church of Scotland* which is still in use today in the Church of Scotland.

Building on these three chapters, Chapter Four sought to clarify the extent of the innovation in Torrance's view demonstrating that it was not merely a rediscovery of

the early church fathers or Calvin. An example of the paradigmatic change that Torrance sought to make was found in his editing of a *Manual of Church Doctrine*. The extent and nature of the revision demonstrated that Torrance had something new to say. A further area that could be explored would be an examination of how Torrance revised Robert Bruce's sermons on communion in *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*.

Some attention was given to Torrance's use of Scripture. This was limited to his use of Scripture as it relates to baptism. Further work would be required to establish the biblical case for Torrance's incarnational paradigm. Westminster's covenantal paradigm is of older vintage and has therefore benefitted from the investigation of generations of scholars. Further research could usefully explore the two paradigms in the light of biblical revelation to establish which paradigm and what aspects of each paradigm could secure biblical underpinning.

Torrance's criticism of Westminster theology was considered in order to remove the caricature of Westminster theology criticised by Torrance. Most of Torrance's criticism was shown to rest upon the fact that Westminster was not consistent with his new paradigm. Rebutting Torrance's criticism is not the same thing as saying that Westminster is a true expression of biblical revelation. The purpose was merely to establish at least what one version of Westminster theology was saying.

Having dealt with Torrance's criticisms of Westminster Bavinck's doctrine of baptism was outlined. The strengths and weaknesses of each doctrine of baptism were discussed especially focussing on the objective/subjective tension. The majority of Westminster theologians and to a limited extent Torrance, attempt to make infant baptism the basis for developing a theology of baptism. This presents a number of unresolved problems. The solution that Bavinck, Bannerman and Cunningham offered was to make discipleship baptism the basis for developing the theology of baptism and to understand infant baptism as derivative in nature. Bavinck's case for infant baptism was the existence of the covenant.

With regard to resolving the issue of the efficacy of each infant baptism as an alternative to the 'wait and see' options discussed, reference was made to Meredith Kline who saw infant covenant baptism as always being sacramental. It was either a baptism onto salvation or onto judgement. The 'wait and see' element here was not 'wait and see' if the baptism rite was really a sacrament evidenced by the faith of the

baptised, but whether the person baptised embraced or rejected the covenant. This discussion requires development beyond the scope of this work.

Attention should also be given to the eschatological aspect to Torrance's doctrine of baptism. Further light on his doctrine and in particular the eschatological aspect of baptism could be gained by applying what Torrance has said on the sacrament of the Lord's supper and assessing how that could apply to baptism.

The task then remained to propose a synthesis of the two paradigms. Because of the nature of paradigms they do not easily lend themselves to synthesis. However an asymmetrical synthesis or, perhaps better, an augmented reformed view of baptism was outlined. Torrance's paradigm was used to help recover the meaning of baptism in Westminster theology. Further work could explore if the Westminster paradigm, or elements of it, could be used to improve Torrance's doctrine of baptism.

A reformed doctrine of baptism using the covenantal undergirding was outlined incorporating Torrance's focus on the meaning of baptism as it is grounded in Christ's vicarious baptism. One aspect of Torrance's 'dimension in depth' was embraced and one set aside. The ontological healing was set aside and the emphasis on the whole incarnation was used.

Developing Torrance's theology could usefully become a collaborative project between those Torrance followers who have identified themselves as Evangelical Calvinists and Westminster theologians.

The positive use of Torrance's theology put forward in this thesis is that he can serve to show what has been neglected in theology and can reinvigorate other theologies to give attention to doctrines like the trinity, the incarnation, union with Christ, the sacrament of the Lord's supper and the meaning of baptism.

Those who describe themselves as 'Evangelical Calvinists' may well feel aggrieved that this is a very limited use of Torrance's theology. However because the soteriological paradigms are so different it is difficult to see how a greater synthesis could be achieved.

It is hoped that the present work will start a discussion on Torrance's use of Scripture, his use of the early church fathers and his presentation of Westminster theology to arrive at an agreed position on the unique contribution that Torrance has offered.

Further work on Torrance's doctrine of baptism could involve researching the submissions made to the Commission on Baptism. The Reports of the Special Commission on Baptism deserve a wider audience and ought to be published.

Torrance mentions the eschatological aspect of baptism but does not develop this. The eschatological aspect of the eucharist has received more attention and Torrance could be used to develop the doctrine of baptism in this direction.

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Appendix One – The Use of *Baptisma* in the New Testament

Baptisma

1. Matt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptising, he said to them: You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?
2. Matt 21:25 John's baptism— where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men? They discussed it among themselves and said, If we say, 'From heaven', he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'
3. Mark 1:4 And so John came, baptising in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
4. Mark 10: 38 You don't know what you are asking, Jesus said. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?
5. Mark 10:39 We can, they answered. Jesus said to them, You will drink the cup I drink and be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with,
6. Mark 11:30 John's baptism— was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!
7. Luke 3:3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
8. Luke 7:29 All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptised by John.
9. Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!
10. Luke 20:4 John's baptism— was it from heaven, or from men?
11. Acts 1:22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

12. Acts 10:37 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—
13. Acts 13:24 Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel.
14. Acts 18:25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.
15. Acts 19:3 So Paul asked, Then what baptism did you receive? John's baptism, they replied.
16. Acts 19:4 Paul said, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.
17. Rom 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
18. Eph 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
19. Col 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.
20. 1 Pet 3:21 and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Appendix Two: Revision of Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick

There are different types of editorial interventions by Torrance

- Additions
- Deletions
- Rewording

Each of the editorial interventions can either clarify the meaning or change the meaning.

The Torrance and Wright edition is listed in the left hand column and the original is listed in the right hand column. Pagination is different in the two texts therefore location of footnotes in the text has been governed by the Torrance and Wright edition in order that footnotes can be compared.

Footnotes appear in blue. Yellow highlighted text in the footnotes indicates new material.

The red font in the left hand column indicates new material in the main text that has been introduced.

Underlined material in the right hand column indicates text that has been edited. Text highlighted in green in the right hand column is text that has been deleted in the revision.

Quantitative analysis

Total Overall Words

	Torrance	Wotherspoon	% Increase
Ch 1	4497	3321	35.4
Ch 2	20743	15662	32.4
Ch 3	6716	5908	13.7
Ch 4	17737	8641	105.3
Total	49693	33532	48.2

Total words in main body

	Torrance	Wotherspoon	% Increase
Ch 1	3494	3040	14.9
Ch 2	15447	13359	15.6
Ch 3	5530	5148	7.4
Ch 4	10570	5993	76.4
Total	35041	27540	27.2

Total words in Footnotes

	Torrance	Wotherspoon	% Increase
Ch 1	1003	281	256.9
Ch 2	5296	2303	130
Ch 3	1186	760	56
Ch 4	7167	2642	171
Total	14652	5986	144.8

The Church of God

I T S C R E A T I O N

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, while He was yet with us in the flesh, spoke of His purpose to build on Himself, the Rock, a Church, against which 'the gates of Hades' (i.e. the power of Death) should not prevail; it should be continuous and enduring. He spoke of the flock of God, of which He Himself should be the Shepherd and the Door. He constantly taught a Kingdom of God, which He compared, for example, to a group of virgins going out to watch for the Bridegroom (Himself), or to a household of servants to be entrusted with the goods of their absent Lord (Himself). It appears from His final discourse to His Apostles that the Society, which He designed to create and to leave in the world to represent Him until His return, would be vitally a single whole, organically one as a living plant is one.

This oneness it was to derive from Jesus Himself, and from the oneness of the Father and the Incarnate Son. 'I am the true vine', He said, 'and my Father is the husbandman. . . . I am the vine' [i.e. not the vine-stock, but the vine including the branches], 'ye are the branches.'¹

THE CHURCH OF GOD

I T S C R E A T I O N

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, while He was yet with us, spoke of His purpose to build on Himself, the Rock, a Church, against which 'the gates of Hades' (i.e. the power of Death) should not prevail; it should be continuous and enduring. He spoke of the flock of God, of which He Himself should be the Shepherd and the Door. He constantly taught a Kingdom of God, which He compared, for example, to a group of virgins going out to watch for the Bridegroom (Himself), or to a household of servants to be entrusted with the goods of their absent Lord (Himself). It appears from His final discourse to His Apostles that the Society, which He designed to create and to leave in the world to represent Him until His return, would be vitally a single whole, organically one as a living plant is one.

From His prayer to the Father, which followed this discourse, it appears that the Society should consist of (i) those whom the Father had already given to Him, and (2) those who 'should believe upon him through their word'; and that these should be perfected into 'one'.² This 'one' is the Church of God.

This one Church did not first come into being with the Incarnation. It came into being with the Covenant of grace and is as old as Creation, but it was separated out and manifested in the specific form that Covenant took with Abraham and Israel.

The one Church that existed under the old form or economy of

1 John xv. 1, 5.

2 'Perfected in one' refers to the fulfilment of Christ's self-consecration on behalf of the Church, and therefore to the holiness and unity of the Church in Him. See John xvii. 17-19; and Hebrews ii. 10-12.

the Covenant was given a new form or economy in Christ in whom all God's promises of blessing and redemption are perfectly fulfilled. This one Church gathered up by Christ in Himself, and reconstructed as the New Israel in the Twelve Disciples or Apostles, is the Society of the New Covenant, solemnly inaugurated at the Last Supper and finally fulfilled in His death and resurrection. It has its beginning in creation, its redemption and fulfilment in Christ, and in Him it reaches out to the new creation.¹

At the time of His Ascension our Lord left behind Him in readiness in the world the constituent elements of the Church in its new form, a nucleus for its future development. There was the Discipleship—the Holy Flock; and in the midst of this, a Ministry—the Apostleship; and these Apostles had in charge the means of grace. He had taught them the Name of

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the Father, He had taught them to pray, He had taught them the things concerning the Kingdom of God, He had instituted for them the Sacraments; they knew Himself for **whom** they were to be witnesses, and they knew the great redemptive acts which were to be the substance of their Gospel to the world; and they were clothed by Him with mission and commission to go into all the world, making disciples, baptizing and teaching. All things were ready. Out of the dust God had prepared a Body for His Son, the Second Adam—though as yet **it had to be quickened by the breath or Spirit into new life.**²

Our Lord's Ascension was followed by a time of pause and silence. He had commanded the Apostles to wait for that which the Father had promised, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. When the Paraclete (**the Divine Helper**) should come, they should receive power and become Christ's witnesses.

On the Fiftieth Day (Pentecost) the promise of the Father was fulfilled. Christ had prayed the Father, and He sent forth that Other who should abide with them. Once more God breathed into the clay, and the Body prepared for Christ arose and lived. The mouths of the Apostles were opened; their understanding was quickened.

1 'As we believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so do we constantly believe that from the beginning there has been and now is, and to the end of the world will be, one Kirk.' *Scots Confession* of 1560, Art. xvi (see also Art. v in Appendix G, p. 114; and Art. xviii, Appendix H, pp. 114L)

2 The question which the Apostles addressed to Christ on the very eve of His Ascension is one of the indications that, up to that moment, they were still **lacking in spiritual capacity for understanding (Acts i. 6), in spite of the opening of their mind by the risen Christ (Luke xxiv. 45).**

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1 The question which the Apostles addressed to Christ on the very eve of His Ascension is one of the indications that, up to that moment, they were still ' without understanding, ' even without spiritual capacity for understanding (Acts i. 6).

The Spirit brought all things to their remembrance: He took the things of Christ and showed them to them; and they received power, and with great power testified of the Resurrection: they began to preach and to baptize; on that day there were added about three thousand souls. Pentecost is the **new-birthday** of the Church of God. The Church is thus a Divine creation, not a self-associated fellowship. It is the product of life, not of mechanism. It is from above—not built by us upon earth, but descending from God out of Heaven, and laying hold of us to assimilate us to its order.¹ It is the immediate sphere of the operation of the Holy Spirit mediated to it through Christ. If we speak of the Church as the City of God, the Holy Spirit is compared² to a River of Life flowing continuously to and through it from the Throne of God and of Christ; or if we think of the Church as Christ's Body, we may compare the Holy Spirit to the **living relation between** the Head and the members.

By His mediation of the Holy Spirit Christ rules, Christ acts, Christ teaches, Christ ministers among us; and Christ's ordinances become **instruments** of Christ's activity. The Paraclete does not speak 'from Himself'.³ He has no self-originated communication, but whatsoever things He hears He speaks.⁴ The truth into which it is promised that the Spirit shall lead the Church is the truth of every word which Christ has spoken.⁵ The ordinances which the Spirit honours are those ordinances which Christ has set in the Church. There is no 'Kingdom of the Spirit' known to us; but only a Kingdom of Christ in and by the Spirit. The Church is not an incarnation of the Spirit of God, **but it is the Body of Christ on earth and in history, i.e. the community of men and women with which He identifies Himself and which in His grace He reckons to be His own earthly and historical Body. It is constituted as Church only because**

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Christ by pure grace makes it one with Himself.⁶

1 W. Milligan, *The Ascension and Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord*, p, 233.

2 Rev. xxi. 1.

3 John xvi. 13.

4 Ibid.

5 John xvi. 13, compare xiv. 26; and *The Westminster Confession of Faith* [hereafter cited as *Conf. of Faith*], i. 6.

6 'Christ confers upon us this honour, that He is willing to be esteemed and recognized; not in Himself merely, but also in His members. Hence the same Apostle says elsewhere (Eph. i. 23), that the Church is His *completion*, as though He would, if separated from His members, be incomplete' (J. Calvin, *Comm. on 1 Cor.*, xii. 12). 'There is but one Christ. Yes, the Head and the body make but one Christ, so that you cannot divide the body without dividing Christ' (George Gillespie, *The true Resolution of a present controversy concerning Liberty of Conscience* (1644)).

We must be careful, then, not to think of the Church as anything apart from Christ or as possessing inherent vitality or power of its own. It has nothing but what from moment to moment is communicated to it by its Lord. Though it is filled with Divine Life, it 'has not life in itself'.¹ It is inspired by the Spirit, but inspired only with the thought which is in Christ's mind. It knows the truth, for it has the faith which has been once for all delivered to it—but it is only a witness to that truth; the Church is in no sense an oracle or source of truth. It can bring forth new things as well as old—but only from the treasury of which it is keeper; and in bringing forth the new cannot deny the old. The Faith, the Ministry, and the Sacraments are all anterior to the **Christian** Church—given to it, and to be guarded by it as they have been given. The Church owns nothing, but it is a steward, of whom one thing is required—that it be found faithful. The

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<p>Church has authority, not power; power is of God. It has authority to minister, but no authority over what it ministers. It cannot change the King's Word. It cannot modify Christ's ordinance. It is a servant, not a master of the Law. And it dare not be ashamed of Christ or of His Word, lest He be ashamed of it.</p> <p>ITS CALLING</p> <p>The Church's Calling is, then, a Heavenly Calling.² As the Father sent Christ into the world, so Christ sends us into the world³ serving Him, representing Him and united with Him in His Mediatorial offices as <i>Prophet, Priest, and King</i>.⁴ He exercises these offices in His unique way as King and Lord and Redeemer. We are called to share in these offices in quite a different but complementary way, as heralds and servants and as redeemed sinners.</p> <p>(i) In unity with Christ as the Prophet of God, the Church's calling is PROPHETIC.</p> <p>(a) It is <i>Evangelistic</i>. It originates in a Mission—the Mission of Christ to the World. The Church is sent to the Nations, to preach the Gospel to every creature and to gather out the Election in readiness for the Advent. No lapse of time can alter the character</p> <p>1 John vi. 53. 2 Heb. iii. i-iv. 13. 3 John xx. 21. 4 See Calvin's <i>Geneva Catechism</i>, 34-45; <i>The Westminster Larger Catechism</i>, 42-45; <i>Conf. of Faith</i>, Art. viii.</p> <p>thus impressed upon it in its origin—the Church exists to evangelize.</p> <p>(b) Its calling is further to <i>testimony</i>. Its prophetic function is not limited to the preaching of Christ outside of Christendom.</p> <p>Everywhere, within Christendom and without, the Church is surrounded by a world which does not know the Father; and it has to declare the Father by testifying to the Son. The Church is</p>	<p>Church has authority, not power: power is of God. It has authority to minister, but no authority over what it ministers. It cannot change the King's word. It cannot modify Christ's ordinance. It is a servant, not a master of the Law. And it dare not be ashamed of Christ or of His Word, lest He be ashamed of it.</p> <p>ITS CALLING</p> <p>The Church's Calling is, then, a Heavenly Calling.¹ As the Father sent Christ into the world, so Christ sends us into the world,² representing Him and united with Him in His Mediatorial offices as <i>Prophet, Priest, and King</i>.</p> <p>(1) In unity with Christ as the Prophet of God, the Church's Calling is PROPHETIC.</p> <p>(a) It is <i>Evangelistic</i>. It originates in a Mission—the Mission of Christ to the World. The Church is sent to the Nations, to preach the Gospel to every creature and to gather out the Election in readiness for the Advent. No lapse of time can alter the character</p> <p>1 St. John vi. 53. 1 Heb. iii. 1. 2 St. John xx. 21.</p> <p>thus impressed upon it in its origin—the Church exists to evangelise.</p> <p>(b) Its calling is further to <i>testimony</i>. Its prophetic function is not limited to the preaching of Christ outside of Christendom.</p> <p>Everywhere, within Christendom and without, the Church is surrounded by a world which does not know the Father ; and it has to declare the Father by testifying to the Son. The Church is God's</p>
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God's witness of the Incarnation, of the Atonement, of the Resurrection, of the Ascension, of Christ's **Advent and** final glory, and of our assembling to Him to receive the deeds done in the flesh. By the Spirit it has to convict the world's conscience 'of **sin** and of **righteousness** and of **judgement**',¹ preparing the way of the Lord.

(2) In unity with Christ as the one Eternal Priest of God, the Church's calling is **PRIESTLY**.²

(a) It is a calling to *worship*,³ There is a worship in the Spirit and in the truth which God seeks: of that the Church is the appointed Minister. As a body the Church has it in charge to 'hallow the Father's Name', and to present before Him the Memorial of Christ and the Sacrifices of Alms and Praises with which He is well pleased.

(b) It is a calling to *intercede*. The Father wills that Christ's voice of pleading heard in Heaven should, by means of the Church, be heard from earth both in behalf of those who are in Christ and also for the world—and for the revelation of God's Kingdom. The Church's calling to intercede is coextensive with that of its Lord, **whom** it thereby **serves**.

To the measure of its understanding and power, it has to re-echo here the whole supplication of Christ and to reflect to God His whole purpose in Christ.

(c) It is a calling to *bless*.⁴ There is committed to the Church a Ministry of benediction upon all that is good: upon everything in the natural life which is of God's institution and which is

¹ John xvi. 8.

² T. M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, I, v; *The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government*, 'Pastors'.

³ William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, chs. iv and v; *The Ministers' Manual*, Part i, ch. i.

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¹ Prof. Lindsay, *Church and Ministry*, i. v.

4 See *The Presbyterian Form of Church Government*: 'To bless the people from God, Num. vi. 23, 24, 25, 26. Compared with Rev. i. 4, 5 (where the same blessings, and persons from whom they came, are expressly mentioned), Isa. lxvi. 21, where, under the names of Priests and Levites to be continued under the Gospel, are meant evangelical pastors, who are therefore by office to bless the people.'

according to God's will—upon lawful authority and honest law— upon human affections and unions—on all which because it is not against Christ is for Him. In the Name of God the Church meets the world with Christ's peace: and where the son of peace is, there the peace shall abide.

(d) Because in such functions it represents Christ, the Church's calling is to *holiness*. **Christ sends out His Church as already consecrated in His self-consecration on its behalf. Therefore** it has to cast out of itself the evil, and to keep itself separate to the methods of Heaven. It has to glorify Christ by what it is as a Holy Fellowship and as an embodiment of the Kingdom of God. It has to perfect itself as the instrument of Christ's will.

(3) In unity with Christ, to whom God has given the Kingdom, the calling of the Church is to all the graciousness of HIS ROYALTY

and watchfulness of His shepherding.

(a) Towards those that are within, the Church's calling is *pastoral*. Through its ministry it has to feed the flock of God, to take the oversight thereof, to lead in paths of righteousness, to fulfil the **mission** of Christ in subduing us to Himself. It has to deliver to the baptized that One Faith which it has received, to teach them to observe all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded, to train and aid them to walk in the Spirit. There is both an instruction and a discipline for them that are within, with an especial duty to 'feed Christ's lambs' in the godly and Christian upbringing of

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youth. The Church must 'keep in the Name of God' those whom the Father has given to the Son.

(b) Towards all those that are without, the Church's calling is to *mercy*. Representing Christ in His fulness, it has a ministry to need, bodily as well as spiritual. All works of charity lie within the Church's duty. Every work of reclamation or of preservation, all protection of helplessness, or prevention of evil, or defence of the oppressed, or rebuke of injustice, is proper to it. The Church is called to speak and to act for Him who had compassion on the multitude because they were as sheep not having a Shepherd, and its works must agree with its word.

THE CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

'The Catholick or Universal Church which is invisible consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the Head thereof: and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. 'The Visible Church, which is also Catholick or Universal . . . consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the House and Family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.'

The distinction here drawn is important. In the knowledge **and eternal purpose** of God, 'The Holy Catholick Church' of all ages (as above defined) exists and constitutes 'one thing'. **In the words of Thomas Boston: 'Christ has not two Churches, one invisible and another visible; but one Church, that in one respect is visible, and in another respect is invisible. Christ is not a Head with two Bodies, but we are "all baptized into one Body", and "mystical Christ is but one", i Cor. xii. 13.'**

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It is the whole company of the redeemed, that which God has given to the Son, that which Christ has loved, for which He gave Himself, which at the last He shall present to Himself faultless. From the human point of view this is necessarily 'invisible', since by far the greater part of its existing membership is at rest in Paradise, and part has a place only in God's purpose and is not yet called into being.³

Part only, then, of this 'Holy Catholick Church' can be at one moment 'visible'. 'We who are alive' represent in place and time that whole which God alone sees in its completeness. The great procession of the faithful crosses the world's stage—and only such part of it as is actually crossing the stage is visible; and as it passes through the world, a 'Mixed Multitude' (like that which went up with the Hebrews) goes with it and blends with its march⁴—'they are not all Israel which are of Israel'⁵ (the seal of God is that the Lord knoweth them that are His):⁶ nevertheless this is God's Israel which, as we watch, is on its way, and upon this which we

1 Conf. of Faith, xxv. 1, 2.

2 T. Boston, Who have the right to Baptism, and who are to be baptized'? pp. 200f. By 'mystical Christ' Boston means 'the Head and the members', i.e., the whole Christ including His Church (Works, viii, pp. 2i2f.).

3 'These are not two Churches distinct from each other, as Romanists accuse us of believing; they are just two different aspects of one and the same Church: on the one hand, as it is seen and known by God only, who knows all hearts; and on the other hand, as it is recognized by us, who can only judge after the outward appearance. Thus the distinction of the Church as visible and invisible arises solely from the imperfection of our discernment and is really a different mode of viewing the same spiritual body' (J. S. Candlish, The Christian Salvation,

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4 Exod. xii. 38

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6. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

can see falls for its day the Church's vocation in the world: to this for the day is committed the stewardship.¹ 'Unto this Catholick Visible Church Christ hath given the Ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the Saints in this life to the end of the world: and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto.'²

CATHOLICITY

(a) The word *Catholic* means in the first place 'universal'—not confined to one Nation, as election was before under the law.³ The whole company of the baptized is in the mind of Christ one Society: interruptions of communion within this Society are of man, not of God. The Church is one by bond of nature, as a family is one whether united in friendship or not. Particular (or local) churches are members thereof.⁴ For purposes of discipline and order the Church has generally been organized on the basis of locality—'the saints in every place' being grouped together under one authority.

The governmental divisions of the Church have as a rule followed secular divisions, and in the first place coincided with the 'city' and its dependent district. When the Empire broke up into nationalities, national churches came to be

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As a matter of fact, no separate society of the truly spiritual exists, and our Lord has explicitly forbidden the attempt to form such a society (Matt. xiii. 29). The distinction drawn by *The Confession of Faith* between the Church Invisible and the Church Visible is the universally admitted distinction between the Holy Catholic Church inclusive, and the 'Church militant here upon earth'. See John Knox, *An Answer to a Letter written by James Tyrie, Works, VI*, pp. 494k, soif.

2 *Conf. of Faith*, xxv. 3. See also *The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government*, 'Of the Church'.

3 *Conf. of Faith*, xxv. 2; cf. the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. 54: 'What do you believe concerning the Holy Catholic Church?'—'That out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, the Son of God, by His Spirit and Word, gathers, protects, and preserves for Himself in the unity of the true faith and unto everlasting life, a chosen community; and that I am, and forever shall remain, a living member of the same.' *Craig's Catechism*, 1581: 'Why is the Church called Universal?'—'Because it is spread through the whole world.' 'How many Churches are there in the world?'—'One Church, one Christ: as one Body and the Head.' 'Is it bound to any particular time, place, or persons?'—'No, for then it would not be universal' (edit, by T. F. Torrance, *The School of Faith*, p. 120).

4. *Conf. of Faith*, xxv. 4.

recognized. These, while professing the same faith and holding the same ordinances, exercised, within limits more or less defined, the right to frame canons (or rules) for their own government, and to follow different usages in worship and (in detail) of custom.

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When in the Sixteenth Century the general corruption of faith and morals led to the Reformation and its protest against the Roman usurpation, the sporadic and

gradual nature of the movement in one after another of the national churches which accepted it, led to a pronounced accentuation of their autonomy. While retaining in common the Divine Ordinances and the **Catholic** Creeds, they adopted, each for itself as it was reformed, 'Confessions' or statements of doctrine, for the guidance of teaching and for testimony: and they regulated their internal policy on different models. They have not thereby changed their identity or broken their continuity. They are the same national churches now reformed, and members of the one visible and **Catholic** Church which our Standards define.

The Reformers believe that it was the Roman Church that had departed from the Apostolic faith. It was by the Church itself that the Reformation had been effected. The Reformers sought not to destroy the Church as a united and visible body, but to strengthen it and cleanse it by restoring its Apostolic and primitive form. In the eyes of the Reformers there was no real disruption at the Reformation—baptism and ordination were held as valid and the Reformed presbyter emerged from the Roman priesthood; the Catholic Church Reformed was no national sect, but The Universal Kirk.¹

(b) The word '**Catholic**' is also used in a secondary sense which it acquired at a very early date, with the rise of heresy and the occurrence of schism. In this sense it is applied to the Church in the direct current of its life, as distinguished from elements which have diverged into by-channels, or which have fallen into separation or into error. The **Catholic** Faith means the Faith, which, being guaranteed by the Holy Scriptures (the Rule of Faith), has been continuously and permanently held from generation to generation. A Catholic doctrine is one which, deriving from Apostolic delivery, has been held and taught by the Church, and has been guaranteed in the

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acceptance of it by the flock. It is thus distinguished from sectional opinion. It is

1 e.g. the *Scots Confession* of 1560, Art. xvi. (Appendix H, pp. 114f.)

distinguished also from doctrine upon subjects which have emerged into attention at periods later than the first period, and which cannot therefore be directly verified in the Apostolic deposit. A Catholic practice is one which is rooted not in local or temporary use, but is immemorial in the Church generally. What can be dated as new at any point in post-apostolic history is at the most something less than Catholic.¹

(e) The word 'Catholic' has also a canonical and juristic sense which is decided by the Edict of Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius (A.D. 380): that those are to be called Catholics who believe 'the one Godhead and equal majesty and holy tri-unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost'. The Scottish Reformers in 1558 had this definition in view when they required that 'the Church be reformed in accordance with the precepts of the New Testament, the writings of the Ancient

Fathers, and the Godly and approved laws of the Emperor Justinian'² (in whose code the Theodosian Edict had been incorporated). In the same sense the Second Helvetic Confession cites the Edict, and continues: 'Since we are then every one of us of this Faith and Religion, we trust that we shall be held by all not for heretics but for Catholics and Christians.' To that Confession the Church of Scotland adhered in 1566 and 1567, and renewed the adhesion in the Glasgow Assembly of 1638 as incidental to its return to the Presbyterian platform.

As a branch of the Reformed Church the Church of Scotland has consistently

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1 Allen, *Christian Institutions*, pp. 326-332.

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By the custom of Christian antiquity and by the public law of Europe the Church

followed the example of Calvin who sought to restore the face of the Apostolic and Catholic Church by reforming it in accordance with its apostolic foundation and in agreement with the Catholic doctrine of the Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church. It was precisely because of this adherence to Catholic doctrine that it has opposed the innovations in doctrine and practice of the Roman Church as detracting from its catholicity.³

of Scotland is entitled to be called Catholic.²

¹ See T. F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. i, pp. 162, 166.

² Robert Keith, *History*, I. vi; David Laing, *Knox's History of the Reformation*, i.

³ See J. Calvin, *Institutes* Bk. iv; *Reply to a Letter by Cardinal Sadoletto to the Senate and People of Geneva* (*Tracts*, I, pp. 25ff.); *The True Method of Reforming the Church and healing her divisions* (*Tracts*, III, pp. 24off.); John Knox, *An Answer to a Letter written by James Tyrie* (*Works*, VI, pp. 48sff.); *Requirements of the Church of Scotland for Union:—Doctrine* (Tract published by Wm. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh.)

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II *The Doctrine of Ordinance*

The Church of Scotland teaches that the 'outward and ordinary means by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of Redemption are His *Ordinances*, especially the Word, Sacraments, and Prayer'.¹ An ordinance is a thing *ordered*. Christ has instituted in the Church certain external means for spiritual purposes. In themselves they can have no spiritual effect; and they are administered through persons who of themselves have no power to give them effect. But it is Christ who has ordered and appointed them, and Christ has power in earth as in heaven. It is therefore a rational conclusion, and is moreover an assurance which is constantly and continually verified in Christian experience, that Christ makes good His own institution, and gives effect to His own ordinance. He stands behind the ordinance, and His action follows its action. He makes it efficacious for the end for which He appointed it. We believe this, because we believe in Christ. His command is a promise. It is done in heaven as it is done in earth.

When it is said that these ordinances are the 'outward and ordinary' means of grace, it is implied that these are not the only methods of grace: it is implied that there are also 'inward' and 'extraordinary' **operations**.

(a) There are inward operations of Christ by the same Holy Spirit, in which Christ addresses the soul directly, moves the conscience, or influences the heart. The one kind of operation does not exclude the other: but, on the contrary, both are simultaneously at work in every Christian life.

(b) Ordinances are 'ordinary means' of grace, i.e. they are common to us all, and

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(b) Ordinances are 'ordinary means' of grace, *i.e.*, they are common to us all,

are meant for us all alike. But God has also special dealings in providence with each life, unlike His dealings with any other life—and these are 'extraordinary' means of grace.

1 The Westminster Shorter Catechism, 88.

These may be providential: each life is unique, and 'whatsoever comes to pass' in it, is appointed by Divine love and wisdom. Or they may be of a higher and more personal order, as were the appearance of our Lord to St. Paul in the way to Damascus, the voice that rang in the consciousness of Augustine, and perhaps the vision of Constantine. In a human family the father provides home and food and clothing and education for all his children, making no difference—such is the 'ordinary' provision of the household;¹ yet also with each child he deals differently according to character and need. Christ's ordinances are for the household, the Church, and are for every member of it alike, and they are needful to all as the daily bread; but they do not exclude or make less needful interior operations of the Spirit special to each, or the occasional dispensation by which His love awakens, disciplines, or trains each in the individual relation of that soul to Himself. Both methods—the 'outward' and the 'inward', the 'ordinary' and the 'extraordinary'—are in fact applied to all who are Christ's.

The Spirit whom Christ sends works in manifold ways: in the transcendent freedom of God, and in accordance with the divine economy or dispensation of grace.

Christ compares Him in His operation (*a*) to the wind,² and (*b*) to the water.³ The wind 'bloweth where it listeth'—it is recognized, Christ says, only in results: we see the branches tossing in the wind and hear their rustling, but we cannot see the wind itself. Such is the Spirit operating in His divine freedom and presence. But He is also like water, which

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The Spirit Whom Christ sends works in two ways.

Christ compares Him in His operation (*a*) to the Wind,¹ and (*b*) to the Water.² The wind 'bloweth where it listeth'—it is recognised, Christ says, only in results: we see the branches tossing in the wind and hear their rustling, but we cannot see the wind itself. Such is the Spirit in His natural operation.

But He is also like Water, which flows in

is poured out for the thirsty to take and drink. Such is the Spirit poured out upon the Church, whose office it is to fulfil within it all the promise and blessings of God in Christ. He is the Spirit sent by Christ along with His creative Word to make the appointed ordinances of Christ effective means of grace, so that through them it is Christ Himself who comes to us in the quickening power of His Spirit. Such is the Spirit who comes to us and awaits us in ordinance. He operates in the transcendent freedom of God's grace—

'The wind bloweth where it listeth'; but in the ordinance and grace of God He is poured out like living water. Of Him it is said, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,'⁴ 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.'⁵

¹ Luke xii. 42.

² John iii. 8, &c.

³ John iv. io, vii. 37-39.

⁴ Isa. Iv. 1.

⁵ Rev. xxii. 17.

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Church under the Old Testament had its sacraments as the divinely appointed signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace. From the beginning when man fell from God through his disobedience God 'made unto him a most joyful promise, to wit, that *the seed of the woman shall break down the serpent's head*, that is he should destroy the works of the devil', as the *Scots Confession*

puts it.¹ 'This promise, as it was repeated and made more clear from time to time; so it was embraced with joy, and most constantly

received of all the faithful from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to David, and so forth to the incarnation of Christ Jesus, all (we mean the faithful Fathers under the Law) did see the joyful day of Jesus Christ, and did rejoice.'² With Abraham and Israel this Promise took the form of the Old

its fixed and certain channel, to which the thirsty can go and take and drink. Such is the Spirit as He awaits us in ordinance. The Ordinances of Christ are channels of grace.

'The wind bloweth where it listeth'; but of the Living Water it is said, 'Ho !

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one that thirsteth, *come ye* to the waters,'¹ 'Whosoever will, let him *take* of the water of Life freely.'²

¹ St. Luke xii. 42.

¹ St. John iii. 8, etc.

² *Ibid.*, iv. 10, vii. 37-39,

¹ Isaiah Iv. 1.

² Rev. xxii. 17.

Covenant or Testament which was ratified and sealed with 'two chief sacraments, to wit, Circumcision and the Passover, the despisers and contemners of which were not reputed for God's people.'³ These two Sacraments marked out the covenanted sphere of union and communion with God, and were the divinely appointed ordinances extending to the people of God the evangelical promise of blessing and salvation that would embrace all nations. This Covenant represented the gracious will of God to ally Himself with His creatures as their God and Saviour, to commit Himself to His people in fatherly kindness, and to take them into communion with Himself. 'I will be your God and you will be my people. I will be God to you and to your seed after you.' This is the Covenant of the Old Testament, and it is the same as the Covenant of the New Testament. There is only One Covenant and one Church, or one Covenant people inheriting the Promises in all ages, but under the New Testament the Covenant is given a different economy or dispensation. The *substance* of the Covenant remains the same, although in the old economy it was given under the form of a promise waiting fulfilment, while in the new economy it is given under the form of a promise already fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That is the New Covenant in the Incarnation, in the Body and Blood of Christ. With this change in the economy of the Covenant, there is necessarily a change in the mode of sacramental signification and sealing action, and hence the

1 Scots Confession, 1560, Art. iv.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid. Art. xxi.

sacraments of the Old Testament are displaced by the corresponding sacraments of the New Testament. It is indeed in the two sacraments of the Gospel that the real meaning of the

sacraments under, the Law becomes apparent. 'The Sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the New (i Cor. x. i, 2, 3, 4).'¹

THE SACRAMENTS AND THE INCARNATION²

In order to our salvation the Eternal Word 'became flesh'³ and dwelt among us, taking our nature in its completeness—body, soul and spirit—into union with His Deity, to become the instrument of our regeneration. Through the humanity thus assumed God 'took hold'⁴ of our nature to redeem and re-fashion it. That nature our Lord carried in His own person throughout His life and death, and by His Resurrection exalted it into a new condition over which death and evil have no power;⁵ by His Ascension He obtained for it a place in the Heavenly Order: and so, becoming the Mediator of the Holy Spirit to His Body the Church, He is able to communicate to us the benefit of His Passion and the power of His Resurrection and the fellowship of His Ascension. Human nature as it exists in Him is a new creation⁶ in holiness and immortality,⁷ and He imparts that nature to us, through the Holy Ghost, by His Word and His ordinances, to recreate us in His own likeness.⁸ Believers are 'added to Him',⁹ made members of His body¹⁰ which is instinct with His Life. The redemptive acts of Christ, to accomplish which He 'became flesh', are all accomplished in the body as well as in the Spirit. Scripture lays emphasis on this fact. He 'became partaker' of our flesh and blood that through death He might destroy him that hath the power of death.¹¹ He 'suffered in the flesh'.¹² He 'bore our sins in His own body on the tree'.¹³ We are sanctified by the offered Will of Christ, but it is 'through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ'.¹⁴ His victory over death is by the resurrection of the body,

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1 *Conf. of Faith*, xxvii. 5.

2 See D. M. Baillie, *The Theology of the Sacraments*, pp. 6iff.

3 John i. 14.

4 Heb. ii. 14-16.

5 Rom. vi. 9.

6 2 Cor. v. 17.

7 Eph. iv. 24.

8 Phil. iii. 21.

9 Acts ii. 47.

10 Eph. v. 30.

11 Heb. ii. 14-15.

12 1 Pet. iv. i.

13 1 Pet. ii. 24.

14 Heb. x. 10.

in which, being risen, He is Himself and not a ghost,¹ and the issue was for Him an actual ascension into the Heavens.² The method of Redemption therefore is incarnational, in which, God adapts Himself to our creaturely existence in order to reconcile us to Himself and lift us up to share in His own divine life and love.

It is in accordance with this that the application of Redemption by the Spirit of Christ should proceed, as it does, not only by such means as those of the Word and prayer, but also by *Sacraments*, in which Jesus Christ in His grace condescends to give us Himself in a form suitable for us, and so makes Himself accessible to our frailty and weakness. Here He comes to us under the sign and veil of physical objects specially appointed by Him to represent Him and specially sanctified by Him as instruments of His self-communication. In the Sacraments, therefore, Christ assumes a sensible vehicle and, in association with sign and element for our recognition and appreciation, grants us to share in the mystery of the incarnate life and death and resurrection.

The Sacraments result from the fact that Salvation operates by Incarnation; and they import that our relation to Christ is a living relation embracing our whole

3 St. John i. 14.

4 Heb. ii. 14-16.

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The Sacraments result from the fact that Salvation operates by Incarnation ; and they import that our relation to Christ is a vital relation, embracing our whole

nature, bodily as well as spiritual. We are not only 'one Spirit'³ with the Lord, but we are also of His Body. The Sacraments are, then, an essential part of the Gospel, and their doctrine is the seal and crown of the promise and assurance of the Gospel, intimately related to the supreme hope of the resurrection.⁴

THE SACRAMENTS

A Sacrament is an Ordinance instituted by Christ, in which, by material elements ('sensible signs') used as He has appointed, He Himself and His benefits are signified, sealed, and applied to believers.⁶ The word 'Sacrament' is not found in Scripture, and it has no exact equivalent in the language in which the New Testament is written. **It was used very early in the history of the Church as the**

1 Luke xxiv. 39.

2 Acts i. 9.

3 1 Cor. vi. 17.

4 John vi. 54.

5 *Conf. of Faith*, xxvii. 1. See also *Larger Catechism*, 162, *Shorter Catechism*, 92. **In the Reformation Catechisms of the Church of Scotland, the sacraments are expounded under *Thanksgiving*, i.e. as acts of worship and prayer. See especially *Craig's Catechism*, 1581, 'The Fourth Part of God's Honour: Thanksgiving'.**

Latin translation of *mysterion*, especially when used of divine things, as in Eph. i. 9; iii. 3-9; v. 32; Col. i. 27; 1 Tim. iii. 16; which refer to the revelation of the mystery fulfilled in the Incarnation. A common use of *sacramentum* in Latin was for the formal oath which a soldier gave to his commander on enlisting. Calvin pointed out that the Early Church took this over in a changed form and 'made it the act whereby the commander admits soldiers to his ranks'.¹ In this

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2 St. Luke xxiv. 39.

3 Acts i, 9,

4 1 Cor. vi, 17,

1 St. John vi. 54.

2 *Confession of Faith*, xxvii. 1. See also *Larger Catechism*, 162, *Shorter Catechism*, 92.

sense also it was commonly applied to Baptism.

Afterwards it came to be used of the Holy Communion as well, since in communicating the Christian renews his baptismal pledge. Thus not only was it frequently employed in the Latin translation of the New Testament, but it came to refer to Baptism and Eucharist as the holy ordinances appointed for the dispensation of the mysteries of God; as the equivalent of the Greek word 'mystery';² and in the fourth and fifth centuries it was accordingly used for many sacred rites or ceremonies, such as the laying on of hands after Baptism, the separate elements in the Holy Communion, the clauses of the Lord's Prayer, etc.³ In the Middle Ages it became technical, and came to be restricted to certain principal rites which were regarded as covering the administration of the means of Grace. Of these, however, two had always been recognized as pre-eminent and on a plane by themselves, namely, Baptism and the Holy Communion: and the Reformers unanimously inclined to restrict the name Sacrament to these.⁴ These two Ordinances stand alone among our Lord's Institutions in their use of material elements (as well as word and action) for spiritual purpose, and in their universality⁵ of application. The

¹ J. Calvin, *Institutes* IV. xiv. 13.

² See *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*, by Robert Bruce (trs. T. F. Torrance), pp. 40, 52.

³ See J. Bingham, *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, xii. 1, 4.

⁴ 'We acknowledge and confess that we now in the time of the Evangel have two chief Sacraments only, instituted by the Lord Jesus, and commanded to be used of all those that will be reputed members of His Body' (*Scots Confession*, xxi). The phrase 'two chief' sacraments may be noted; Calvin did not object to Ordination being called a Sacrament, although he

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¹ Eph. i. 9, iii. 3-9, v. 32; Col. i. 27; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Apoc. i. 20, xvii. 7.

² See Bingham, *Antiquities*, xii. 1. 4

³ 'We acknowledge and confess that we now in the time of the Evangel have two chief Sacraments only, instituted by the Lord Jesus, and commanded to be used of all those that will be reputed members of His Body' (*Scots Confession*, xxii.). The phrase 'two chief' sacraments may be noted; Calvin did not object to Ordination being called a Sacrament,

would not number it among the ordinary Sacraments, 'because it is not ordinary or common to all believers, but is a special rite for a certain function.' *Institutes* IV. xiv. 20, xix. 28.

5 'To be used of all' (see previous note). Cf. Calvin's *Geneva Catechism*".

'There are only two Sacraments common to all which the Lord Jesus has instituted for the whole company of the faithful. Baptism is for us a kind of entrance into the Church of God, for it testifies that instead of us being strangers to Him, God receives us as members of His family. The Supper testifies that God as a good Father carefully feeds and refreshes the members of His household' (*The School of Faith*, p. 56).

Church of Scotland adopts this restriction of the term.¹ There are two such ordinances and only two, because these two cover the whole field of the Christian Life. The one is the Sacrament of entrance into life in Christ, the other of abiding and of growth in that life. There is no room for any third ordinance of parallel scope or of comparable importance.

'A Sacrament has two parts' (*Larger Catechism*, 163): the one 'an outward and sensible sign used according to Christ's appointment', the other 'an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified'. Neither of these, the sign or the 'grace',² is by itself the Sacrament; a Sacrament exists where sign and grace are brought together into one operation and constitute a single action; so that where the sign is, there is the grace, and so that what the sign signifies simultaneously takes place in the spiritual region.³ This may be illustrated from our own double constitution in body and soul. The body without the soul is not the man, but is only a corpse: the soul without the body is not the man, but is only a ghost. In life, soul and body are found together and constitute one man. The soul acts by means of the body; the

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body receives life from the soul.

Thus, in intercourse with a friend, hand of flesh grasps hand of flesh in greeting: lips of flesh speak to fleshly organs of hearing; but it is soul which by these outward means greets soul, and it is mind which speaks to mind. This is at least analogous to Christ's meeting with us in Sacraments. The outward sign is the *body* of the Sacrament; Christ by the Holy Spirit is the *life and soul* of the Sacrament.⁴ There is in every Sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.⁵ A Sacrament operates in three manners: its outward part (the

1 Conf. of Faith, xxvii. 4; *Larger Catechism*, 164; *Shorter Catechism*, 93.

2 By 'grace' is meant *Christ Himself* in His Grace, i.e. 'Christ clothed with His Gospel', 'Christ and His graces', 'Christ and His benefits'. Robert Bruce describes the thing signified as 'the whole Christ with His whole gifts, benefits and graces, applied and given to my soul' (op. cit., p. 45); or as 'the whole

Christ, God and man, without separation of natures, and without distinction of His substance from His graces' (pp. 45f.).

3 Robert Bruce (op. cit.), pp. 42ff.; *Craig's Catechism*, 1581, *The School of Faith*, pp. 149f.

4 'The Spiritual part of both [Sacraments] is Christ and His benefits.' (*Larger Catechism*, 176.)

5 *Conf. of Faith*, xxvii. 2; cf. *Scots Confession* 1560, Art. xvi.

sign) 'signifies, seals, and applies' its spiritual part or content.¹

(1) *It signifies. This is to be understood in an effective sense (signum facere) as well as a cognitive sense.* The sign is appropriate to the grace. Baptism manifestly imports cleansing: The Holy Communion manifestly imports

means of the body ; the body receives life from the soul.

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(1.) *It signifies. That is to say,*

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<p>nourishment; and so of the details of each Sacrament, which are individually and designedly symbolic of truth. The sign and the thing signified correspond to each other; else the one would not be a sign of the other.²</p> <p><i>1 Larger Catechism</i>, 162; <i>Shorter Catechism</i>, 92. See R. Bruce, <i>op. cit.</i>, p. 106.</p> <p>2 The Sacraments are obviously symbolic. But they are more. The Church of Scotland teaches that what is only symbolic is not sacramental. 'A Sacrament has two parts', and symbol is only one of them. A Sacrament 'applies' and 'exhibits' as well as 'signifies' or 'represents'. In this the Ordinances of the New Testament differ from those of the Old Testament, which promised but did not yet give full participation in the reality signified. The Baptism of John was not a sacrament in the Christian sense (see Acts xix. 1-7). It was only when that rite was filled with content in Christ that it was transformed into Christian Baptism.</p> <p>'The grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost' (<i>Conf. of Faith</i>, xxviii. 6, Of Baptism). 'We utterly damne the vanitie of those that affirme Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs. . . whosoever slandereth us, as that we affirme and believe Sacraments to be naked and bare signs, do injurie to us, and speak against the manifest truth' (<i>Scots Confession</i>, xxii).</p> <p>(2) <i>It also seals</i>. That is to say, it conveys in an emphatic and personal manner divine ratification; it indicates the individual who receives the Sacrament as himself the object of God's gracious blessing; and it marks him (to himself, to the Church, before man</p>	<p>details of each Sacrament, which are individually and designedly symbolic of truth. The sign and the thing signified correspond to each other; else the one would not be a sign of the other.⁴</p> <p><i>3 Larger Calm.</i>, 162; <i>Shorter Calm.</i>, 92.</p> <p>4 The Sacraments are obviously symbolic. But they are more. The Church of Scotland teaches that what is only symbolic is not sacramental. 'A Sacrament has two parts,' and symbol is only one of them. A sacrament 'applies' and 'exhibits' as well as 'signifies' or 'represents.' In this the Ordinances of the New Testament differ from those of the Old Testament, which <u>were merely typical—were signs and no more</u>. The Baptism of John was not a Sacrament, <u>but only a symbol</u> (see Acts xix. 1-7). '</p> <p>The grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost' (<i>Conf. of Faith</i>, xxviii. 6, of Baptism). 'We utterly damne the vanitie of those that affirme Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs . . . whosoever slandereth us, as that we affirme and believe Sacraments to be naked and bare signs, do injurie to us, and speak against the manifest truth' (<i>Scots Confession</i>, xxii.).</p> <p>9(2.) <i>It also seals</i>. That is to say, it conveys in an emphatic and personal manner; it indicates the individual who receives the Sacrament as himself the object of God's gracious <u>intention</u> ; and it marks him (to himself, to the Church, and before <u>men</u>) as being within God's Covenant and one of God's chosen</p>
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and before God) as being within God's Covenant and one of God's chosen flock.³

(3) *It applies* (or 'exhibits': a word which, as used in theological documents, has the same meaning as 'applies'), that is to say, it actually conveys and confers its spiritual part. What a Sacrament signifies, seals, and applies is **the truth and grace of Christ, not 'truth' by itself or 'grace' by itself but Christ who is full of grace and truth, so that it is out of His fullness that we receive.**

It is the efficient instrument of a Divine operation and a medium of grace **which cannot be separated from the Divine Giver.** It effects that

3 Conf. of Faith, xxvii. r; Larger Catechism, 162; cf. Calvin's Geneva Catechism, 312: 'Seeing it is the proper office of the Holy Spirit to seal the promises of God in our hearts, how do you attribute this to the Sacraments?' — 'There is a great difference between the one and the other. The Spirit of God is in very truth the only One who can touch and move our hearts, enlighten our minds, and assure our consciences, so that all this ought to be judged as His own work, that praise may be ascribed to Him alone. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself makes use of the Sacraments as inferior instruments according as it seems good to Him, without in any way detracting from the powers of His Spirit.'

which it symbolizes because what it signifies, Christ does.¹ In this it is a Sacrament; and in this a Sacrament differs from the merely symbolic.² Other actions may 'seal', as, for example, Benediction; and may unite symbolic action with the Word, as, for example, the lifted hand in Benediction: but these are not therefore Sacraments in the sense of the definition here adopted.

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of the Incarnation. It is possible to invent instructive ceremony, or to devise significant symbolism, or to employ rites which shall appeal to the heart by recalling the history or suggesting the doctrine of the Gospel; but it is impossible to invest such things with efficacy, or to create for them a 'spiritual part', **or to fill them with Christ.** The Church cannot institute a Sacrament. The true Minister of the Sacraments is Christ: i.e. the action in each Sacrament is proper to Christ alone. None but He can wash away sin, or can give the Holy Spirit, or can instil life. It is proper to Himself to show His own death for us: He alone can give Himself to be our food. The commissioned Ministry acts in His Name and on His behalf; as the Baptist was nothing but only a Voice, so they are but a hand by which the Lord from Heaven carries out His proper work among us. The Ministry has the *authority* to minister: the *power* is in Christ. The immediate Agent in the Sacraments is the Holy Ghost sent forth through Jesus Christ. That which we see of them is only **the outward means or instrument: it is the Holy Spirit alone who makes them efficacious.**³ He conveys to us 'Christ and His benefits',

1 The Church's Catechisms speak of the Sacraments, therefore, as Christ's 'inferior instruments' (Calvin) or 'the ordinary or outward instruments of Salvation' (Craig), 'instruments of the Spirit' (Craig and Duncan). *The School of Faith*, pp. 54f., 99, 136, 148, 284.

2 This difference appears the more clearly if we contrast the two symbolic actions done by our Lord on 'the night on which He was betrayed':
(a) He washed the disciples' feet, and He said, 'Ye ought also to wash one another's feet.'
(b) He took bread and blessed and brake it, and likewise the cup also, and said, 'This do for My Memorial.' To outward appearance the two actions closely resembled each other in character, and

possible to invent instructive ceremony, or to devise significant symbolism, or to employ rites which shall appeal to the heart by recalling the history or suggesting the doctrine of the Gospel; but it is impossible to invest such things with efficacy, or to create for them a 'spiritual part,' or to make them channels of grace. The Church cannot institute a Sacrament. The true Minister of the Sacraments is Christ: i.e.—the action in each Sacrament is proper to Christ alone. None but He can wash away sin, or can give the Holy Spirit, or can instil life. It is proper to Himself to show His own death for us : He alone can give Himself to be our food. The commissioned Ministry acts in His Name and on His behalf; as the Baptist was nothing but only a Voice, so they are but a hand by which the Lord from Heaven carries out His proper work among us. The Ministry has the *authority* to minister: the *power* is in Christ. The immediate Agent in the Sacraments is the Holy Ghost sent forth through Jesus Christ. That which we see of them is only the channel: the Holy Spirit is the River of Living Water Who fills the channel.¹ He conveys to us 'Christ and His benefits,'

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His language in the two cases is not dissimilar. But the latter is a Sacrament—the former is not. One is for grace—the other is only for edification. 3 Cf. R. Bruce, op. cit., p. 45. 'Strictly speaking, no one has power to deliver Christ but God the Father, or He Himself. No one has power to deliver the Mediator, but His Own Spirit. Nevertheless, it has pleased God to use some instruments and means by which He would deliver Christ Jesus to us. The means are these: the ministry of the Word, and the ministry of the Sacraments; and because He uses these as means to deliver Christ, they are said to deliver Him. But here you have to distinguish between the principal efficient deliverer, and the instrumental efficient deliverer, which is the Word and Sacraments. If we keep this distinction, both these are true: God by His Word, and God by His Spirit, deliver Christ Jesus to you. I call them signs, then, because God has made them potent instruments to deliver the same thing they signify.'

making the Sacraments 'effectual'.¹ Apart from His action in them, they could be nothing: there is no 'virtue in them, nor in him that doth administer them'.² Our whole faith as regards the Sacraments is *faith in Christ* that He stands over His own ordinance, fulfilling what it implies: and *faith in the Holy Ghost*, that He honours Christ's Word, taking the things of Christ and making them ours, so that what Christ wills to do for us is done. On this account it is that the Sacraments, which to unintelligent apprehension might seem 'external' things, or at least less spiritual than other ordinances such as the word or prayer, are the most spiritual of all. Except to faith they are nothing, and except to the spiritual man they are little. It is plain that their 'outward part'—the washing of the skin with water,³ or the feeding upon bread and wine,⁴ can have of itself no effect upon the soul. It is self-

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evident that 'efficacy'⁵ must in such a case depend upon the presence and action of the Holy Ghost. Faith is thrown entirely upon Him to find anything at all in Sacraments. They are nothing in the world except what He makes them; they contain nothing unless what is by Him imported into them. The soul coming to the Sacraments is *compelled* to look through their apparatus of 'sensible sign' (as one looks through, and not at, the glass of a window) to Christ and His benefits, and to the operation of the Holy Ghost as He follows Christ's Word. Faith is then **required for our assimilation of all the blessings that the Sacraments convey.**

Faith is the correspondence of the human will with the Divine action. To come in faith to a Sacrament is to come to it ENTIRELY, soul as well as body: the soul seeking it, grasping it, yielding to it, apprehending it in its spiritual part, as the body apprehends and receives its outward part or sign. The whole man then comes to a whole Sacrament. To come without faith to a Sacrament is not to come to the Sacrament, but only to come in a bodily way to the outward part of the Sacrament. In such a case, the spiritual part is there, and is offered—in a sense (so far as the Divine faithfulness is involved) is bestowed, BUT IT IS NOT RECEIVED—the spiritual in the man is

- 1 *Larger Catechism*, 161.
- 2 *Shorter Catechism*, 91.
- 3 1 Pet. iii. 21.
- 4 1 Cor. x. 16.
- 5 *Conf. of Faith*, xxviii. 6, 'Of Baptism'.

not accessible to the spiritual in the Sacrament. **Christ with His** grace is there—no failure on Christ's part is possible; but there is failure on the part of the recipient: the living water is held to his lips, but HE DOES NOT DRINK. Thus the grace of the Sacrament is to him for judgement, not for Salvation.¹ Faith, however, can take out of a Sacrament

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only what is in the Sacrament. Faith creates nothing: it seeks and receives. The grace which is in the Sacrament does not depend upon our faith; but our obtaining it from the Sacrament does depend upon our faith. The spiritual part of the Sacrament is the same, whatever we believe or do not believe; but unless we believe, we shall not seek or take it.² A vessel is not filled with water by our belief that it contains water; but unless we believe it to contain water we shall not attempt to drink from it. Christ said to the woman who touched His garment, 'Thy faith hath saved thee'—for it was her faith which had caused her to touch His garment. But the efficacious cause of her healing was 'virtue which went out from Christ'; and virtue went out from Christ because there was virtue in Christ. If the woman had touched any one of the disciples, mistaking him for Christ, her faith would have been the same, but she would not have been healed; no virtue would have gone out from that disciple, because in a disciple there was no 'virtue'. Faith is not creative, but receptive.

BAPTISM

In common with the Church of God generally, the Church of Scotland teaches that 'Baptism is a *Sacrament*'—that is to say, that it has two parts, an outward and visible sign, and a corresponding operation of the *Spirit*.³ It signifies and seals;⁴ but it also *applies* what it signifies.

1 Conf. of Faith, xxix. 8.

2 Calvin's Geneva Catechism: 'Although the unbelievers and the wicked make of none effect the grace offered to them through the Sacraments, yet it does not follow that the sacred nature of the Sacraments is also made of none effect. How, then, and when do the Sacraments produce this effect? When we receive them in faith, seeking Jesus Christ alone and His grace in them' (op.

only what is in the Sacrament. Faith creates nothing: it seeks and receives. The grace which is in the Sacrament does not depend upon our faith ; but our obtaining it from the Sacrament does depend upon our faith. The spiritual part of the Sacrament is the same, whatever we believe or do not believe ; but unless we believe, we shall not seek or take it. A vessel is not filled with water by our belief that it contains water ; but unless we believe it to contain water we shall not attempt to drink from it. Christ said to the woman who touched His garment, ' Thy faith hath saved thee' —for it was her faith which had caused her to touch His garment. But the efficacious cause of her healing was ' virtue which went out from Christ' ; and virtue went out from Christ because there was virtue in Christ. If the woman had touched any one of the disciples, mistaking him for Christ, her faith would have been the same, but she would not have been healed ; no virtue would have gone out from that disciple, because in a disciple there was no ' virtue.' Faith is not creative, but receptive.

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In common with the Church of God generally, the Church of Scotland teaches that ' Baptism is a *Sacrament*'¹—that is to say, that it has two parts, an outward and visible sign, and a corresponding operation of *grace*. It signifies and seals ; but it also *applies* what it signifies.

1 Conf. of Faith, xxix. 8.

cit., p. 55).

3 *Conf. of Faith*, xxviii. i. Cf. also the *Westminster Directory for Public Worship*, 'Of Baptism', which enjoins prayer to this effect: 'That He would join the inward Baptism of the Spirit with the outward Baptism of water; make this Baptism to the infant a seal of adoption, remission of sins, regeneration, and eternal life, and all other promises of the Covenant of Grace. . . .'

4 *The Book of Common Order*, 1940, 'Order for the Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism to Infants': 'The Sacrament thus instituted is a sign and seal of our ingrafting into Christ; of forgiveness of sins by His blood, and regeneration by His Spirit, and of adoption and resurrection unto everlasting life. By this Sacrament we are solemnly admitted into His Church. . . .' (see Appendix P, p. 121).

The outward part in this Sacrament is washing with water in the name of the Holy Trinity.¹ The inward part is 'engrafting' into Christ, regeneration, remission of sins, and giving up unto God.² It is not merely for the admission of the person baptized into the visible Church: Baptism is 'into Christ'.³ Baptism has efficacy.⁴ It not only 'offers', but in it the Holy Ghost really 'exhibits' (i.e. applies) and confers **what is promised**.⁵ This **gift** endures; and its possession is a constant reason, on the one hand, for penitence in that we fall short of or walk contrary to it; on the other hand, it is a ground of confidence; it is a background of faith, and an ever-present motive of conduct.⁸ This teaching of our Church is to be understood and received in view of the fact that Baptism is the act of God. In Baptism the baptized person does nothing, but only surrenders himself to a Divine operation. True, he comes **to Baptism or follows it** with confession of faith, renunciation of

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hindrance, and promise of fidelity. But these are not parts of Baptism; they are **requirements** of Baptism—**factors in its proper use.**

In Baptism itself the baptized is passive; so much so that the Scripture compares it to the act of dying, as the extreme instance of passive yielding into God's hands; or even compares it to the burial of the dead.⁷ When, therefore, Scripture speaks of this or that as done in Baptism, it is the act of God of which it speaks, not the subsequent response of man to that act- On the Divine side all is real and complete in Christ. God does for us whatever is needful for our being put into a state of grace. Of that we can speak confidently. There is not Yea and Nay with God.⁸ The contents attributed

to Baptism are all of them acts of God; *He* engrafts; *He* regenerates; *He* remits sin; *He* calls and 'engages' us to be the Lord's. God does it, and it is done. But nothing is asserted as to our acceptance or use of this

1 Conf. of Faith, xxviii. 2.

2 Ibid., xxviii. i ; Larger Catechism, 165; Directory, 'Exhortation'.

3 Ibid., xxviii. 1. See John Warden of Gargunnoch, A Practical Essay on the Sacrament of Baptism, pp. 37, 55f., &c.

4 Ibid., xxvii. 6.

5 Ibid.

6 Larger Catechism, 167; Directory, 'Exhortation'.

7 Rom. vi. 3-5; Col. ii. 12.

8 2 Cor. i. 20.

grace, nor of our answer to this calling.

Baptism is not the Sacrament of what we do, but a Sacrament of what God has already done in Christ, and therefore of what He offers to us in the Gospel. It is a Sacrament of the Gospel, not of our response to the Gospel, although it requires response from us.

We ought in answer to repent, to believe,

hindrance, and promise of fidelity. But these are not parts of Baptism ; they are conditions of Baptism—steps in the way to it.

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to turn to God with all our heart, to hold to Christ and to grow up into Him.

But Baptism does not ensure our doing of any of these things. It only calls for them and makes them possible. No one speaks of Baptismal repentance or of Baptismal conversion, for repenting and turning to God are actions which God gives us grace to do, not things that God does for us.

The gift may be received in vain. What is grafted may wither. What is generated may not come to birth. What is born may die. The forgiven may go on to sin. The son may prove prodigal and go from his father's house. Yet the grafting, the generating, the birth, the adoption took place.¹ What, then, we say of Baptism and its effect we do not say of man's response to grace, which is uncertain, but of God's grace, which is sure. Much is true of Baptism

which may not be true of each baptized person. We say, 'This God has done for you: what manner of man ought you to be?' The comparisons used in Scripture to explain the operations of Baptism are such as engrafting,² building,³ adoption,⁴ or naturalization.⁵ One idea runs through them—that we are by nature in one condition, parts of a certain whole: that we are by grace detached from that whole: and that we are transferred into a new whole and made organically parts of that instead.⁶ A shoot

¹ Cf. Calvin's *Comm. on Rom.* xi. 22: 'The children of the faithful are grafted in, to whom the promise is due by the Covenant with their fathers; secondly, they are also grafted in who conceive the seed of the Gospel in them but which either takes no root or is choked before it bears fruit; thirdly, the elect are grafted in, that is those who are illuminated by the inscrutable purpose of God unto eternal life. The first sort are cut off when they refuse the promise given to their fathers, or else do not receive it through their unthankfulness; the

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second when the seed of the Gospel withers, and is corrupted in them.' See also

J. Forbes of Corse, *Instructions*, x. 10.

2 Rom. xi. 17-19.

3 1 Pet. ii. 5; 1 Cor. iii. 9.

4 Gal. iv. 5; Eph. i. 5.

5 Eph. ii. 12-13; Phil. iii. 20.

6 'Baptism . . . testifies also to our new birth, that we are begotten spiritually into a heavenly life. It testifies further to our union with the Body of Christ. It is also a seal as well as a testimony. It not only testifies but seals this up in our hearts, and makes us in our hearts taste the heavenly life already

begun in us—i.e. the fact that we are translated from the death in which we were

conceived, and inserted into the Body of Christ' (R. Bruce, op. cit., pp. 73f.).

Cf. John Willison, *Works*, pp. 459, 461, where Baptism is spoken of as 'a breaking off from the old stock of nature and in ingrafting into Christ', and Thomas Boston, *Fourfold State*, *Works*, viii, p. 178.

grows on one plant, it is cut from it and inserted into another plant, of which it is designed to become a branch. A stone is originally part of the quarry bed; it is rent loose from that and built into the Temple wall. A child is naturally of its own family—it is taken out of that family and adopted into another. A man is born citizen of one country and renounces that citizenship that he may be naturalized into a new allegiance. So in God's dealings with us—we are 'by nature children of wrath', children of the First Adam, shoots of the wild olive, citizens of this world; and we are called out of darkness, made members of the Second Adam, liberated from bondage, brought into God's family, grafted into Christ, made citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, in which sin is forgiven, in which grace abounds. We are transferred to a new plane of life, lifted up into a new sphere, brought within the operations of the Holy

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Spirit who dwells in the Body of Christ; into a new world of life and light and love and peace and hope. It is God Who does this: we have not chosen Him, but He has chosen us;¹ if we love Him, it is because He has loved us. God is first; all is of grace; and of this grace Baptism is the Sacrament, 'signifying, sealing, and applying' it. It marks for the individual God's purpose for **him**. 'Christ died for the world'—but now: Christ died for this man. 'God has chosen some'—but now: God has chosen YOU. And He translates you into the Kingdom of His dear Son. This change of status and **sphere** is compared to a new birth: and the act of God in according it is compared to an act of spiritual generation.² Grace is never mechanical, never compulsory—but without Divine Grace we can do nothing. **What is done** may be neglected and 'unimproved'; it may be received to condemnation rather than to salvation: but in order that there may be any response on our part to the great Redemptive acts of God, God's own help is necessary.

We may believe, then, that with God's calling there is given God's Spirit. It is at least made possible that the soul should meet mercy with repentance, and love with faith. Baptism is not a mockery. It is 'of the Spirit' as well as 'of water'. Whether by the very fact of the introduction of the baptized by Baptism into the sphere of the Spirit's blessing and operation, or whether by direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the soul's effective dispositions, or whether by the implanting of **new life by** the Holy Spirit in the soul, we must

¹ John xv. 16.

² John iii. 5; Titus iii. 5.

believe that there is constituted for us in our Baptism a real opportunity, and that the Divine 'calling and election' which it unquestionably bestows is sincere. Our faith in God as true seems to imply and to

new atmosphere, brought within the operations of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the Body of Christ; into a new world of life and light and love and peace and hope. It is God Who does this : we have not chosen Him, but He has chosen us ; ¹ if we love Him, it is because He has loved us. God is first; all is of grace; and of this grace Baptism is the Sacrament, 'signifying, sealing, and applying' it. It marks for the individual God's purpose for himself. 'Christ died for the world'—but now :—Christ died for this man. 'God has chosen some'—but now:— God has chosen YOU. And He translates you into the Kingdom of His dear Son. This change of status and atmosphere is compared to a new birth : and the act of God in according it is compared to an act of spiritual generation.¹ Grace is never mechanical, never compulsory—but without Divine Grace we can do nothing. Grace may be neglected and unimproved ; it may be received to condemnation rather than to salvation : but in order that there may be any response on our part to the great Redemptive acts of God, God's own help is necessary.

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demand this further faith. It is this faith in God which is expressed when regeneration is said to be part of the content of Baptism.¹ What is meant is the antecedent act of God, whatever that be, which enables for life in Christ. The assertion of regeneration stands for two things, both of the greatest evangelic importance: (i) for the prerogative of God to be first in our salvation; (2) for the right and duty of the baptized man to exercise faith in God through Christ, and to 'turn to the Lord' with full assurance that God purposes his salvation: 'I will arise and go *to my Father*'. We know that 'God for Christ's sake has forgiven us', and that we 'are begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ'. God has given us to Christ. We find ourselves bound to faith and holiness as a man is bound by the ties of blood to natural affection in his home, or to loyalty to his nation and country—debts which are in like manner created for him by the act of God, and which come upon him with his life itself. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. The love of Christ constrains us. God 'engages us to be His'.

SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM

The Church of Scotland further teaches that Baptism is to be administered to the children who are born within the Kingdom of God, **that is, concretely, within the people of God, who mark out the sphere on earth where God rules through His Word and Spirit.**

Such has been the immemorial practice of the Universal Church. Our Lord has taught us ² that the little child is the ideal citizen of that Kingdom—'of such' it consists; and it receives them, for in seal of His words Christ took children into His arms and blessed them—and they were blessed. So far from the children being

¹ Conf. of Faith, xxviii. 1; Larger

faith in God as true seems to imply and to demand this further faith. It is this faith in God which is expressed when regeneration is said to be part of the content of Baptism.¹ What is meant is the antecedent act of God, whatever that be, which enables for life in Christ. The assertion of regeneration stands for two things, both of the greatest evangelic importance :—(I) for the prerogative of God to be first in our salvation ; (2) for the right and duty of the baptized man to exercise faith in God through Christ, and to 'turn to the Lord ' with full assurance that God purposes his salvation : ' I will arise and go *to my Father*.' We know that ' God for Christ's sake has forgiven us,' and that we ' are begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' God has given us to Christ. We find ourselves bound to faith and holiness as a man is bound by the ties of blood to natural affection in his home, or to loyalty to his nation and country—debts which are in like manner created for him by the act of God, and which come upon him with his life itself. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. The love of Christ constrains us. God 'engages us to be His.'

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Catechism, 165, &c. See Calvin's *Geneva Catechism*: 'Baptism consists of two parts. The Lord represents to us in it, first, the forgiveness of our sins and secondly, our regeneration or spiritual revival. . . . The beginning of our regeneration and its end is our becoming new creatures, through the Spirit of God' (op. cit., p. 57)- So also *The Heidelberg Catechism* (p. 81), *Craig's Catechism*, 1581 (p. 152), *The New Catechism* (p. 180) and *The Latin Catechism* (p. 285). This element is omitted from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.
2 Matt. xix. 14.

required to depart until they shall become adult sinners, our Lord taught that the adult must become as the little child in order to come into the Kingdom. It was in the course of invitation to Baptism¹ that St. Peter said 'the promise is unto you and to your children', **for the little children of believing parents are not outwith the Covenant community, the Household and Kingdom of God, but within it. The Heavenly Father takes them for His own, brings them into the blessing of His Church in the Baptism of the Spirit, graciously grants them to share in the inheritance of the sons of God, and therefore sets His seal upon them.** Baptism is the act of God: we can do no more than be passive under His gracious touch—the condition of His mercy is that we do not resist it. In the child there is no resistance;² in the child the soul awaits the **blessing** of grace; it is plastic to the influences of the Holy Spirit—the Lord, the Life-giver'. In the Baptism of an adult there must always be present a certain fear lest 'he have neither part nor lot in that matter'³—God alone knows the heart; but in the Baptism of a little child, thanksgiving may be unshadowed, confident. For we know what God has therein done. The rest is still uncertain—we cannot foresee whether this soul will 'work out its salvation' or 'make its calling

1 Conf. of Faith, xxviii, 1; *Larger Catm.*, 165, etc.

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and election sure'; but we have good hope of it through grace. The Church is the servant of God's Ordinance, not its master: it can only 'give the bread in due season' and minister where it is sent.

It cannot baptize where the Gospel is not proclaimed, or outside the sphere where the mighty acts of God in Christ are effectually operative through the Word and Spirit. It can only follow the work of the Spirit in calling out and in building up the Household of God.

Its duty in baptizing is to follow the Divine election; and it dare go no further. It seeks for Baptism those 'to whom the grace belongeth'.⁴ In the case of adults this is indicated by their profession of faith and repentance; in the case of infants the indication must be sought in the appointment of God's providence.

¹ Acts ii. 39.; cf. Deut. xxix. 15. See *The Biblical Doctrine of Baptism* (St. Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1958), pp. 47ff.

² As the way to enter the Kingdom of God is as a child (Mark x. 15) so the most natural way to be baptized is as a child. Cf. J. S. Candlish: 'There is nothing symbolized in Baptism of which infants are not capable. It represents that part of the application of redemption in which man is passive, namely, regeneration, and not that in which he is active, namely, faith and repentance. Now infants are capable of regeneration' (*The Christian Salvation*, p. 163).

³ Acts viii. 21.

⁴ *Conf. of Faith*, xxviii. 6.

In practice this appointment is recognized where there is offered a provision of due sponsorship. It is indubitable in the case of 'infants of one or both believing parents'. But in the failure of the parent (by absence, death, insanity, or moral incapacity) his place may be taken by some Christian friend'.¹ The law of the Church provides

therein done. The rest is still uncertain—we cannot foresee whether this soul will 'work out its salvation' or 'make its calling and election sure'; but we have good hope of it through grace. The Church is the servant of God's Ordinance, not its master: it can only 'give the bread in due season' and minister where it is sent.

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(Act of Assembly, 1712) that 'if parents be dead or absent, or grossly ignorant, or under scandal or contumacious', another sponsor is to present the child—a relation, if possible; and that in the case of foundlings the Kirk Session is to act in this capacity, so that no children in the land may remain unbaptized.² What the Church **lays down as a requirement** of the Baptism of an infant is, then, reasonable guarantee that the infant shall be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Where this prospect exists, the Church recognizes providential indication of a call to baptize. The child may then be regarded as a disciple³ and the proper subject of the precept to baptize such and to teach them all that Christ has commanded. Where such prospect is wanting, the Church dare not involve a soul in the responsibility which Baptism constitutes. The Church of Scotland enacts that the person baptizing shall be an ordained Minister.⁴ The general rule of the Universal Church has been that the presbyter is ordinarily the Minister of both Sacraments, that Deacons may baptize by special permission, and that in extreme cases of urgent necessity Baptism by laymen is, if irregular, still valid. The prohibition by the Church of Scotland of Baptism by others than ordained Ministers may be considered disciplinary rather than **a doctrinal requirement**, and to be intended to emphasize the fact of this irregularity.⁵ **Baptism is no less a Sacrament than Holy Communion, and neither should be administered except by those duly sent by Christ and duly ordained to be ministers of the Word and Sacraments.** The general judgement of **the Church Universal, however**, is that Baptism is **to be acknowledged** if administered by **any** baptized person, with water, in the Name and Faith of the Holy Trinity. Baptism cannot be repeated: repetition of the form is not Baptism,

1 Directory for Public Worship, 'Of Baptism', par. 3.

place may be taken by 'some Christian friend.'¹ The law of the Church provides (Act of Assembly 1712) that 'if parents be dead or absent, or grossly ignorant, or under scandal or contumacious,' another sponsor is to present the child—a relation, if possible; and that in the case of foundlings the Kirk Session is to act in this capacity, so that no children in the land may remain unbaptized.² What the Church requires as a condition of the Baptism of an infant is, then, reasonable guarantee that the infant shall be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Where this prospect exists, the Church recognises providential indication of a call to baptize. The child may then be regarded as a disciple ³ and the proper subject of the precept to baptize such and to teach them all that Christ has commanded. Where such prospect is wanting, the Church dare not involve a soul in the responsibility which Baptism constitutes. The Church of Scotland enacts that the person baptizing shall be an ordained Minister.¹ The general rule of the Universal Church has been that the presbyter is ordinarily the Minister of both Sacraments, that Deacons may baptize by special permission, and that in extreme cases of urgent necessity Baptism by Laymen is, if irregular, still valid. The prohibition by the Church of Scotland of Baptism by others than ministers may be considered disciplinary rather than theoretical, and to be intended to emphasise the fact of this irregularity.

The general judgment of Christianity is that Baptism is valid if administered by a baptized person, with water, in the Name and Faith of the Holy Trinity.

Baptism cannot be repeated : **2** repetition of the form is not Baptism,

2 Sprott, *Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland*, p. 62.
 3 Matt, xxviii. 19 (R.V.).
 4 *Conf. of Faith*, xxvii, 4; xxviii, 2; *Directory*, 'Of Baptism', par. 1.
 5 Baptism in the early church was only by 'Bishops' and the Church of Scotland has retained this through its ministers—each a 'Bishop' in his own parish.

but sacrilege.¹ In case of uncertainty whether Baptism has or has not been

administered, or of uncertainty whether a rite administered was Baptism, conditional Baptism ought, we may judge, to be sought and given. Immersion of the person in Baptism is not necessary,² but only 'washing with water'. The Greek word for Baptism does not necessarily imply immersion, while in the Greek literature of Judaism it usually refers, when used religiously, to sprinkling.³ In northern climates, and in the case of infants, all Baptisms are practically 'clinical', i.e. they are such that precautions have to be taken for considerations of health. Baptism is 'not to be administered in private places or privately, but in the place of public worship',⁴ though exception can be made to this in cases of sickness, &c. Baptism is 'not unnecessarily to be delayed'.⁶

SEQUEL OF BAPTISM

In the case of persons baptized in infancy an important stage occurs when, having been instructed in religion and having reached years of responsibility, they advance to full communion with the Church. To do so they must profess their Baptism, own its obligations, and claim its privileges; and their claim must be admitted and they be confirmed in it by the Church. Hitherto they have been in pupillage: heirs of the Kingdom in right of the new birth, but not yet in possession of its fulness. 'The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing

1 *Dir. for Pub. Worship*, Of Baptism, par. 3.
 2 Sprott, *Worship and Offices*, p. 62.
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SEQUEL OF BAPTISM

In the case of persons baptized in infancy an important crisis occurs when, having been instructed in religion and having reached years of responsibility, they advance to full communion with the Church. To do so they must profess their Baptism, own its obligations, and claim its privileges; and their claim must be admitted and they be confirmed in it by the Church. Hitherto they have been in pupillage : heirs of the kingdom in right of the new birth, but not yet in

from a servant.'⁶ A time, however, comes when the heir is spiritually of age, and may demand to receive his inheritance. He knows what Baptism

1 Conf. of Faith, xxviii. Because Baptism is the Sacrament of the once-and-forall death and resurrection of Christ, to repeat it is to signify the crucifixion of the Son of God afresh and to put Him to an open shame (Heb. vi. 4-6). Because Baptism is solemnly administered in the Name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to reiterate it is to call in question the authority and to doubt the promise of the Trinity in the first administration.

2 Conf. of Faith, xxviii. 3.

3 Christian baptism was not a rite of ceremonial cleansing by ablution but a rite signifying cleansing through the Blood of Christ. In Judaism cleansing by the blood of sacrifice was always by sprinkling, a fact which helped to determine Christian practice. The earliest Christian evidence suggests that Baptism usually involved both a descent into water up to the ankles or knees and pouring of water upon the head of the person baptized. Threefold pouring of water was frequently practised in the Early Church, sometimes in indication of the Trinity, and sometimes in indication of burial, instead of the three handfuls of earth used at the actual interment of a body in the grave.

4 Directory, 'Of Baptism', par. 2.

5 Ibid., par. 1.

6 Gal. iv. 1.

involves, and the vows of it: he believes what the Church believes; and he consents to be separate from what Christ forbids, and to bear his part in the Church's labours and sorrows and sacrifices; and he asks his place in its active ranks. The Church must inquire of him—that he is indeed baptized, and that in faith and life and purpose he is faithful, and, being satisfied of these things must own him and his right, and must serve him heir, and open to him the

possession of its fulness. ' The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant.' ¹ A time however comes when the heir is spiritually of age, and may demand to receive his inheritance. He knows what Baptism

1 Conf. of Faith, xxviii. 3.

2 The Didache, a document of uncertain but approximately early date, allows as sufficient ' to pour water upon the head thrice ' (c. ii.).

3 Directory, Of Baptism, par. 2.

4 Ibid., par. 1.

1 Gal. iv. I.

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way into the Holiest. It is due and right that **the Church** should do this with formal emphasis—with benediction and prayer, and invocation of the Holy Ghost to add His gifts where He has given and has nourished life. The fact that no form or direction for this action is contained in the *Westminster Directory* is due to the opposition which Presbyterians and the Scottish delegates had to encounter in the Westminster Assembly from the Puritan and Erastian elements there. 'A paragraph on the subject was prepared, which it was proposed to introduce as a rubric before the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper', but this, 'if adopted by the Assembly, was rejected by the House of Commons'.¹ The legislation of the Church has, however, constantly recognized and provided for **this stage in the growth and** life of her children. The First Book of Discipline, for example, says— 'None are to be admitted to this mystery [i.e. the Holy Communion] who cannot formally say the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of the Belief [i.e. the Apostles' Creed], nor declare the sum of the Law.' In the period which followed the Reformation 'candidates were carefully instructed, and their admission no doubt took place in church at the public examination of the Congregation before Communion, which was long universal'.² In 1706 the Assembly desires Ministers to take 'as strict a trial as can be of such as they admit to the Lord's Supper, and that they diligently instruct them . . . and charge upon their consciences the obligation they lie under from their baptismal covenant, and seriously exhort them to renew the same'. Baptism is a complete Sacrament: on God's side it ensures to the baptized 'all things that pertain to life and godliness'. But it calls for our response—'a covenant is not of one'; on our side we

¹ Sprott, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

² Sprott, *op. cit.*, p. 84, and W. D. Maxwell, *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland*, p. 91.

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Baptism is a complete Sacrament: on God's side it ensures to the baptized 'all things that pertain to life and godliness.' But it calls for our response—'a covenant is not of one ' ; on our side we

¹ Sprott, *Worship and Offices*, p. 86,

<p>must own and embrace its gift and obligation. While this is true in all cases, it is of course the more obviously necessary where Baptism has been received in infancy. The engagement constituted by Baptism then requires to be fulfilled, on the part of the baptized, by conscious acceptance of its status; and, on the part of the Church, by such examination and preparation as are referred to above, and that formal act by which full consequence is given to the earlier act of their admission into His flock. At this stage of the Christian life we should not only look forward to the Lord's Table and all that participation therein implies, but should first and foremost look back to Baptism, and desire to perfect what concerns that, by the open confession of Christ before God and man, and by securing from the Church recognition and confirmation in the place which Baptism bestows. When the Baptismal status is thus acknowledged the way is open to the Holy Table, and to all Christian privilege. It is therefore <i>Baptism</i>—the completion on our side of Baptismal relations, the authorization by the Church of our access to full Baptismal inheritance, and the strengthening of the baptized through invocation of the Holy Spirit—which ought at this point to be primarily before the soul's gaze.</p> <p>As, then, any baptized person approaches the age of responsibility (nature itself marks the transition and indicates the fitting stage of growth), attention should be directed to this step in our vocation. Parents, Sponsors, Teachers, the Ministry, should speak of it, should direct instruction towards it, should move the young soul to a desire to take it. There should be affectionate invitation. There should be personal encouragement. Everything for the soul's growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ depends upon its obedience at this stage of experience. It is a moment of decision. It is the</p>	<p>1 Sprott, <i>Worship and Offices</i>, p. 84,</p> <p>must own and embrace its gift and obligation. While this is true in all cases, it is of course the more obviously necessary where Baptism has been received in infancy. The <u>relation</u> constituted by Baptism then requires to be <u>completed</u>, on the part of the baptized, by conscious acceptance of its status ; and, on the part of the Church, by such examination and preparation as are referred to above, and that formal act by which full consequence is given to the earlier act of their admission into His flock. At this stage of the Christian Life we should not only look forward to the Lord's Table and all that participation therein implies, but should first and foremost look back to Baptism, and desire to perfect what concerns that, by the open confession of Christ before God and man, and by securing from the Church recognition and confirmation in the place which Baptism bestows. When the Baptismal status is thus <u>completed</u>, the way is open to the Holy Table, and to all Christian privilege. It is therefore <i>Baptism</i>—the completion on our side of Baptismal relations, the <u>perfecting</u> by the Church's seal of our access to the Baptismal inheritance, and the <u>reinforcement of Baptismal grace by</u> the Holy Spirit—which ought at this point to be primarily before the soul's gaze.</p> <p>As, then, any baptized person approaches the age of responsibility (nature itself marks the transition and indicates the fitting stage of growth), attention should be directed to this step in our vocation. Parents, Sponsors, Teachers, the Ministry should speak of it, should direct instruction toward it, should move the young soul to a desire to take it. There should be affectionate invitation. There should be personal encouragement. Everything for the soul's progress in grace depends upon its resolution at this</p>
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opportunity consciously and personally to embrace the Service of Christ and to commit **oneself** to His keeping; the occasion upon which conversion may become definite, and faith become aware of itself, and an eternal bond of love to Christ be **finally established**.

When candidates have offered themselves, they should receive the most loving welcome, and they should enter on a most careful preparation, both of the mind and of the heart, but especially of the heart, leading them to a final examination of their intention, purpose and readiness, and so to the moment when before God and the Church they may own and renew the vows once made on their behalf: **1** when in solemn prayer the Holy Ghost shall be invoked to establish and endow them for new needs and for new service, and hands of blessing shall be **laid** upon them, and they shall know themselves received to the place which Christ has prepared for them.

FORM OF CONFIRMATION

It is **unlikely that** there is any direct connexion between the rite known in the Church as 'Confirmation' and the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, of which two instances are recorded.²

There is **no** evidence that this was done except by Apostles, and no evidence that it was done by them generally, or for all who were baptized by others.³ **As used in the Acts of the Apostles the laying on of hands seems to have been intended as 'a sign of association in the apostolic or missionary task of the Church'. There may have been a rite of laying on of hands of quite a different nature 'done by way of benediction', used in the general ministry.⁴ This was the view of Calvin, which has been so influential in many Reformed Churches. His clearest account is given in his Commentary on Heb. vi. 2: With Baptisms the Apostle connects the**

crisis of experience. It

is a moment of decision. It is the opportunity consciously and personally to embrace the Service of Christ and commit self to His keeping ; the occasion upon which conversion may become definite, and faith become aware of itself, and an eternal bond of love to Christ be formed.

When candidates have offered themselves, they should receive the most loving welcome, and they should enter on a most careful preparation, both of the mind and of the heart, but especially of the heart, leading them to a final examination of their intention, purpose and readiness, and so to the moment when before God and the Church they may own and renew the vows once made on their behalf : when in solemn prayer the Holy Ghost shall be invoked to establish and endow them for new needs and for new service, and hands of blessing shall be stretched out upon them, and they shall know themselves received to the place which Christ has prepared for them.

FORM OF CONFIRMATION

It is entirely uncertain whether there is any direct connection between the rite **later** known in the Church as ' Confirmation' **or the 'Complement of Baptism,'¹** and the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, of which two instances are recorded.²

There is not evidence that this was done except by Apostles, and no evidence that it was done by them generally, or for all who were baptized by others.

Apostles were few; Baptisms were many and in many places—the physical difficulties in the way of the supposition are obvious. Some such practice, indeed, may well have existed in general ministry;³ Baptism constantly took place where conversion took place (Acts viii. 38, xvi. 33, etc.), and there

laying on of hands, for as there were two sorts of catechumens, so there were two rites. There were heathen who did not come to Baptism until they made a profession of their faith. In regard to these, catechizing preceded Baptism. But the children of the faithful, as they were adopted from the womb, belonged to the Body of the Church by the right of promise, and were baptized in infancy; but after the time of infancy, when they were instructed in the faith, they presented themselves as catechumens. In their case this took place after Baptism. But another symbol was then added: the laying on of hands. This one passage abundantly testifies that this rite had its beginning from the Apostles, which afterwards, however, was turned into

1 *Book of Common Order*, 1940, 'Order for the Confirmation of Baptized Persons'. 'You have now come to acknowledge before God and His Church the covenant then made on your behalf.'

2 Acts viii. 14-25, xix. 1 - 6. 'It is when Acts comes to be read outside its missionary

context by late second-century writers who try to relate it to the changed circumstances of their own day that its account of the laying on of hands is misinterpreted as a description of confirmation' (G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, p. 79). This is similar to the view of Calvin, *Institutes* IV. xix. 6.

3 G. W. H. Lampe, op. cit., p. 76.

4 The reference to a doctrine of 'laying on of hands' as among first principles (Heb. vi. 2) may have referred to this.

superstition. They contrived the fiction that it is a sacrament by which the Spirit of regeneration is conferred—a dogma by which they have mutilated Baptism, for what was peculiar to it they transferred to the imposition of hands. Let us know then, that it was instituted by its first founders

might well follow, when opportunity occurred, a rite of infertment into the Christian Congregation.

1 See Lacey, *Mysteries of Grace*, p. 29.

2 Acts viii. 14-25, xix. 1-6.

3 The reference to a doctrine of 'laying on of hands' as among first principles (Heb. vi. 2), is, however, of uncertain application.

that it might be an appointed rite for prayer, as Augustine calls it. The profession of faith which youth made, having passed the time of childhood, they intended to confirm by this symbol, but they thought nothing less than to destroy the efficacy of Baptism. Wherefore the pure institution at this day ought to be retained, but the superstition ought to be removed. This being so, there is nothing to prove a reservation of administration of the rite to Apostles, or to separate it from the ordinary ministry.

The *Didache*¹ gives rules for Baptism, but has no reference to any further rite. Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100-165) gives an account of the Sacraments in which the baptized pass directly from the font to participation at the Lord's table. It does not follow that in the second century hands were not laid on the baptized; but it certainly does follow that no such importance was attached to the action as must have been attached to it had it been a fixed institution received from

Apostles as a condition of the enjoyment of Baptismal privilege. Tertullian² certainly speaks of laying of hands on the baptized as practised in the post-Apostolic Church; he describes Immersion, followed by Unction—'next to this the hand is laid upon us, inviting and invoking the Holy Spirit through the blessing'. It is not a separate Ordinance which he describes, but part of the ritual of Baptism. Unction has appeared in that ritual, and nothing appears to show that the laying on of hands has not been introduced in the same way as unction, or to show that it is a continuation from the Apostolic age.

It is in *The Apostolic Tradition* (c. A.D. 215-217)³ of Hippolytus that we find a further account of the laying on of hands associated with Baptism. The rite of laying on of hands as a benediction on catechumens was used before Baptism. Hands are again laid on during the act of Baptism by the baptizing Presbyter, and then by the Bishop, who prays: 'O Lord

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God, who didst count these worthy of the forgiveness of sins through the laver of regeneration of the Holy Spirit, send upon them Thy grace, that they may

1 *Didache*, vii.

2 *De Baptismo*, 7, 8. In *De Corona Militis*, Tertullian makes no mention of unction or of laying on of hands in his account of Baptism.

3 *The Apostolic Tradition*, §§ 17-23.

serve Thee according to Thy will; to Thee be the glory, to the Father, and to the Son, with the Holy Spirit in the Holy Church, both now and world without end. Amen.' Here we have in Hippolytus a considered embellishment of the rite of Baptism by numerous additional ceremonies, but the laying on of hands and anointing with oil were essentially part of the one indivisible rite of Baptism. It was only in the Gnostic sects that spiritbaptism came to be distinguished from water-baptism, but it

was the influence of this heretical notion upon the further development of such a rite as is described by Hippolytus which seems to have led to the later separation of Confirmation as a distinct rite in addition to Baptism,¹ and indeed as its 'perfection' or 'completion'.²

Cyprian, about the middle of the third century, suggests that this laying on of hands is based on the Apostolic example—and he speaks of the

'necessity' of unction as well, which certainly had no such basis. There can be no doubt that from Cyprian's time onwards the laying on of hands and unction (or chrism) **came to be more generally** associated with the ritual of Baptism, and were administered immediately after the 'washing with water', both to adults and to infants. Of the two things the greater stress was laid on the unction. Unction survived when the laying on of hands dropped into abeyance.³ In the whole Eastern Church unction is administered to the infant upon its Baptism, and there is no laying on of

1 See p. 52, n. 2.

2 *De Bapt*, 7, 8,

Cyprian, about the middle of the third century, suggests that this laying on of hands is based on the Apostolic example—and he speaks of the 'necessity' of unction as well, which certainly had no such basis. There can be no doubt that from Cyprian's time onwards the laying on of hands and unction (or chrism) were both associated with the ritual of Baptism, and were administered immediately after the 'washing with water,' both to adults and to infants. Of the two things the greater stress was laid on the unction. Unction

<p>hands nor any subsequent confirmation of Baptism.</p> <p>In the Western Church the laying on of hands fell into the background as compared with unction:⁴ the administration came gradually to be reserved to the Bishop, and in consequence came to be separated from Baptism—being delayed until the Bishop could be</p> <p>1 See the full and detailed discussion of G. W. H. Lampe, <i>The Seal of the Spirit</i>, pp. 149ff., 223ff., 297ff.</p> <p>2 This idea seems to have arisen through a misunderstanding in the West of <i>perficere</i>, <i>perfectio</i> as translations of <i>teleioun</i>, <i>teleiosis</i>, terms which derived from the L X X where they were employed to denote <i>consecration</i> to holy office or use. This sense is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, for example, ii. 10, v. 9, vii. 11, 19, 28, ix. 9, x. 1, 14, &c., and came to be applied to Baptism in the second century, and later to Ordination.</p> <p>3 With Augustine, for example, confirmation seems to play very little if any part at all, being mentioned possibly once in all his writings.</p> <p>4 The laying on of hands was used in the West as a means of accepting into the Catholic Church those 'validly' baptized out of it, and of 'perfecting' the Baptism of those who had been baptized in necessity by laymen either as infants or adults (Council of Elvira, can. 38, A.D. 306). In the East, heretics coming over into the Catholic Church were often re-baptized on the ground that heretical Baptism was not true and faithful Baptism in the name of the Trinity.</p> <p>present—and finally came to be connected with the attainment of 'years of discretion' or at least of understanding. 'In later times the unction came to be regarded as the distinctive outward sign in confirmation, the imposition of hands</p>	<p>survived when the laying on of hands dropped into abeyance. In the whole Eastern Church unction is administered to the infant upon its Baptism, and there is no laying on of hands nor any subsequent confirmation of Baptism.</p> <p>In the Western Church the laying on of hands fell into the background as compared with unction: the administration came gradually to be reserved to the Bishop, and in consequence came to be separated from Baptism—being delayed until the Bishop could be</p> <p>present— and finally came to be</p>
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being merely an elevation of the Bishop's hands in an attitude of prayer and benediction over the candidates kneeling before him.¹ In the West it was given as soon as possible after Baptism up to the thirteenth century, when it began definitely to acquire the status of a separate sacrament. According to Alexander of Hales, confirmation was first instituted as a sacrament in A.D. 845 at the Council of Meaux,² but this development was only finalized in the Roman Church at the Council of Trent.³ In the modern Roman use Confirmation is administered not earlier than the seventh year of age and generally five or six years later. It is not an admission to full communion—first communion precedes it, and greatly lessens its importance. It is essentially a confirmation with unction, although now the direction to lay the right hand upon the head of candidates has been prescribed. In the Church of England unction was abandoned at the Reformation and the laying on of hands revived. There can be little doubt that the introduction of confirmation, and, long before it, of penance, as separate sacraments not only indicated the weakness of the doctrine and practice of Baptism in the West, but had the effect of depreciating Baptism, for in order to make it into a sacrament the proper promises had to be severed from Baptism and applied to it. Thus all believing were said to become 'complete Christians' after Baptism by receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. This invention Calvin called both an 'insult' and an 'injury' to Baptism.⁴ In the Church of England at the Reformation the notion of Confirmation as a Sacrament 'completing Baptism' was abandoned along with unction, although the rite of laying on of hands was retained and even revived. Most of the Elizabethan and Caroline divines agreed with Calvin that, regarded as a Sacrament, this was an 'injury' to Baptism, but frequently cited Calvin in

connected with the attainment of 'years of discretion' or at least of understanding. 'In later times the unction came to be regarded as the distinctive outward sign in confirmation, the imposition of hands being merely an elevation of the Bishop's hands in an attitude of prayer and benediction over the candidates kneeling before him'¹—*i.e. it was unction and blessing without laying on of hands.*

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support of the view that Confirmation as an act of blessing and dedication, with invocation of the Spirit, should not be neglected.⁵ Although some Anglicans in modern times have tried to revive Confirmation

¹ Bishop A. C. A. Hall, *Confirmation* (Longmans, 1902), p. 31.

² *Summi*. iv. q. 24. 1.

³ *Sess.* VII.

⁴ *Inst.* IV. xix. 6, 7.

⁵ See, for example, the *Works* of Joseph Hall, Vol. x, pp. 442ff.

as the second half of Baptism, completing it by the sacramental bestowal of the Holy Spirit, this has never been and is not the official teaching of the Church of England.¹

It is clear, then, that no one Catholic doctrine or practice in the matter exists. The Anglican Archbishops very well summed up the position (*Letter to Leo XIII*, 1877), when they wrote: The matter of Confirmation [i.e. whether imposition of hands or chrism] is not entirely certain, and we at any rate do not think that Christians who have different opinions on the subject should be condemned by one another. . . . The Roman Church for many centuries has substituted a stretching out of hands over a crowd of children, or simply over those who are to be confirmed, in the place of laying on of hands on each individual. The Orientals (with Eugenius) teach that the matter is chrism, and use no laying on of hands in this rite. If therefore the doctrine about a fixed matter and form in the Sacraments were to be admitted, the Romans have ministered Confirmation imperfectly for many generations, and the Greeks have none. It is clear that we cannot insist very strictly on that doctrine about a fixed form and matter: inasmuch as all Sacraments of the Church, except Baptism, would in that way be rendered uncertain. It is difficult even on these

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¹ In recent editions of the *Pontifical*, this is prescribed.

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principles to see what defect can be alleged against our Scottish practice of Benediction. It has not unction, but neither has the Anglican use. It has not imposition of hands in contact, but neither has the East, nor till lately the unreformed West. It has the essential fact of Baptism solemnly and ceremonially confirmed, which is the only thing that other uses have in common. 'We at any rate do not think that Christians who have different opinions on the subject should be condemned by one another.'²

As to the proper Minister of this Act: the later Western use reserved its administration to the Bishop, and this reservation continues in Roman and Anglican practice. It cannot, however, be contended that the reservation is primitive, or that it is universal, or other than locally customary. Over the whole East the presbyter

¹ See the discussion of this by A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Problems of Reunion*, pp. 108ff.; and by G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*. See H. J. Wotherspoon: *Religious Values in the Sacraments—Croall Lectures, 1926-27. The Special Report of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1950 anent the Preparation of Candidates for Communion* says, 'The Committee stresses the importance of the service for the Confirmation of Baptized Persons'.

² *Responsio*: English translation, p. 17.

This means that the Church of England cannot consistently press the issue of episcopal confirmation in ecumenical relations with other Churches.

who baptizes also 'confirms' (if Unction be the analogue of Confirmation). Ambrose¹ records that in Egypt the presbyters 'sealed' if the Bishops were not present. Jerome² says of his fellow-presbyters: 'It becomes us to preach: it is useful that we bless: it is fitting that we confirm.' Gregory gave dispensation to the presbyters of Sardinia 'to anoint the baptized'. Wordsworth shows that

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'Presbyterial confirmation was in use . . . in Gaul'³ (C. A.D. 500) and says that it was very common and indeed general in the West, wherever Bishops were few.⁴ The Church of Scotland has not left Catholic order in reclaiming to presbyters that they shall '**confirm**' those to whom they have administered **Baptism**.⁵

We may say of her practice what an eminent Anglican writer has said of Anglican practice: 'We are . . . in at least as good a position' with 'regard to this ordinance as some other ancient Churches'.⁶ What we administer is effectually and substantially *confirmation*—and by common consent confirmation ought not to be iterated.⁷

NOTE ON THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS⁸

The Scriptural defence of the **Church's** practice of Infant Baptism may be stated under such heads as the following :⁹

1. 'Verily I say unto you, except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matt, xviii. 3, R.V.). In face of our Lord's consistent representation of childhood as the type of character required in candidates for the Kingdom of Heaven, it is impossible to contend that childhood has not capacity for spiritual gifts, **especially as their 'capacity' is to be judged not so much from the side of the receiver as from the side of the divine Giver, their Creator and Redeemer.**
2. 'When Jesus saw it He was moved with indignation' (Mark x. 14, R.V.). The stern rebuke administered by our Lord to the

¹ On *Ephes.*, iv.

² *Ep. ad Rusticum*.

³ J. Wordsworth, *The Ministry of Grace* (1901), p. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82n.

⁵ J. M. Neale instances Confirmation as an act which a particular Church might give her Presbyters power to do, as being

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'implicitly contained in their office, but not explicitly allowed by the general voice of the Church' (*Letters*, p. 144).

6 A. J. Mason, *Faith of the Gospel*, p. 302.

7 *Book of Common Order*, 1940:

'Confirmation and Admission to the Lord's

Supper': 'Then, the congregation meanwhile standing, the Minister (raising his hand in blessing over the candidates or laying his hand on the head of each as they kneel before him) shall say: "The God of Grace who has called you to His eternal Glory, confirm you to the end. . . ."

8 See also Appendix S, p. 125.

9 See *The Biblical Doctrine of Baptism* (Edinburgh, 1958), ch. iv.

disciples, who would have prevented children (infants)¹ being brought to Him for blessing, seems to illustrate the attitude of His mind towards any practice which proceeds upon the assumption of the spiritual incapacity of children.

3. He 'took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them'

(Mark. x. 16, R.V.) Was this only a form? Was Christ's blessing ineffectual because these were mere infants?

4. 'Make disciples of all the nations, (i) baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; (2) teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you' (Matt, xxviii. 19, 20, R.V.) This form of words, in which Baptism was instituted, **implies** the universal scope of the Sacrament irrespective of nationality or age. The order of the clauses, moreover, which posits the discipline of teaching as for the most part subsequent to Baptism, seems to contemplate a state of Church life in which Infant Baptism is normal, not exceptional.

5. 'Repent ye, and be baptized every one

2 On Ephes. iv.

3 *Ep. ad Rusticum*.

1 *Min. of Grace*, p. 59.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 82, n.

3 John Mason Neale instances Confirmation as an act which a particular Church might give her Presbyters power to do, as being 'implicitly contained in their office, but not explicitly allowed by the general voice of the Church' (*Letters*, p. 144).

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of you in the name of Jesus Christ. . . . For to you is the promise, *and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him' (Acts ii. 38, 39, R.V.).² Why did St. Peter, in urging the promise as a reason for seeking Baptism, deliberately specify its reference to the children of those who believed, unless either (1) the children themselves were fit subjects of Baptism, or (2) the faith of their parents conferred upon them that qualification, or (3) both of these conditions obtained?³

6. The absence of any prohibition of the practice of Infant Baptism implies the positive propriety of that practice. Unless such a prohibition had been pronounced expressly, their belief in the covenant relation, which included children, and their conception of the Family as *one* in the eyes of God—both founded upon Divine ordinance—would leave those who heard St. Peter no alternative but to seek Baptism for their children as well as for

1 Kai ta Brephe, Luke xviii. 15.

2 Book of Common Order, 1940: 'Order for the Adminstration of the Sacrament of Baptism of infants' . . . : 'Though little children do not understand these things yet is the promise also to them. They are the heirs of the Covenant of Grace; and in holy Baptism God brings them into the family and household of faith, and makes them members of Christ, and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.'

3 They were not to be baptized on the ground of the faith of their parents but on the ground of the divine promise and of the faithfulness of Christ. It is Christ and not another who can stand in for them, for He alone is the faithful 'Amen' of man to God. See *The Biblical Doctrine of Baptism*, pp. 60f.

themselves. The same considerations are equally valid now. The covenant is an everlasting covenant, the family the perpetual unit of society.

to Baptism, seems to contemplate a state of Church life in which Infant Baptism is normal, not exceptional.

5. 'Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ . . .

For to you is the promise, *and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him' (Acts ii. 38, 39, R.V.). Why did St. Peter, in urging the promise as a reason for seeking Baptism, deliberately specify its reference to the children of those who believed, unless either (1) the children themselves were fit subjects of Baptism, or

(2) the faith of their parents conferred upon them that qualification, or

(3) both of these conditions obtained?

6. The absence of any prohibition of the practice of Infant Baptism implies the positive propriety of that practice. Unless such a prohibition had been pronounced expressly, their belief in the covenant relation, which included children, and their conception of the Family as *one* in the eyes of God—both founded upon Divine ordinance— would leave those who heard St. Peter no alternative but to seek Baptism for their children as well as for

1 Kai ta Brephe St. Luke xviii. 15.

7. 'She [Lydia] was baptized *and her household*' (Acts xvi. 15); the Philippian jailer 'was baptized, *he and all his* immediately' (Acts xvi. 33, R.V.); 'I baptized also *the household* of Stephanas' (1 Cor. i. 16). It is possible, of course, that there were no children in any of these three households; but the probability is that there were children—a probability which becomes still greater in view of the fact that the Roman *familia* comprised slaves and their dependants.

8. In two of St. Paul's Epistles—that 'to the saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus', and that 'to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse'—in passages which deal directly with the several duties of various classes of the baptized—children are included in the exhortation, and are specifically addressed as 'in the Lord' (Eph. vi. 1; Col. iii. 20).

9. Those who deny the legitimacy of Infant Baptism appear to place themselves in this dilemma, that either children are excluded from the Covenant of Grace, or, although included in it, are having the seal of the Covenant withheld from them.

10. If children be withdrawn from the Kingdom of the covenanted Grace of God, the scope of the Redemption, which surely has every stage of human life in view, is unwarrantably restricted. 'Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized?'¹

THE LORD'S SUPPER

'Our Lord, in the night in which He was betrayed, instituted the Sacrament of His Body and Blood.'² In the outward part of this Sacrament Bread and Wine are laid upon the Table, which St. Paul calls 'The Lord's Table.'³ These the minister of Christ, after Christ's example, 'takes', and, having 'given thanks', 'sanctifies', 'blesses', and thereby 'sets apart'.⁴ He uses sacramental

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actions: that of the Bread is to take and break it: that of the Cup is to take and to raise it from the Table.⁶ He

¹ See Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament*, pp. 7iff.

² *Conf. of Faith*, xxix. 1.

³ 1 Cor. x. 16-17.

⁴ *Conf. of Faith*, xxix. 3; *Directory*, 'Celebration of the Communion', par. 6.

⁵ *Paraphrase* xxxv. 4.

uses a sacramental formula to express what in the Sacrament the elements of Bread and Wine, being now consecrated, are: for certainty of authority the words used are the words of the Lord Himself—'This is My Body', 'This Cup is the New Testament in My Blood'. He then gives the Bread to be eaten by the Faithful, saying, 'This is the Body of Christ', and the Cup to be drunk, saying, 'This Cup is the New Testament in the Blood of Christ'.¹ The spiritual part of the Sacrament is

(i) the commemoration of Christ's offering of Himself upon the Cross once for all, and an oblation of all possible praise to God for the same;² and (2) the reception and feeding upon Christ crucified, His Body and Blood, **followed by thanksgiving**.³ It will be seen that this Sacrament **has two aspects** which are inseparable, but distinct. They are inseparable: for the elements may not be consecrated except to be consumed; moreover, **the second part cannot be fulfilled without the fulfilment of the first**;

nor is Christ's Death fully shown unless its purpose in our Salvation is shown by reception of the elements. They are distinct: for the first is our coming to God to show His Son's death; the second is Christ's coming forth to us in God's Name to bless and nourish us. **While these two parts of the Sacrament form one indivisible Eucharist, for convenience they are distinguished as the Consecration and the Communion. The Eucharistic Action of the Sacrament**

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It will be seen that this Sacrament proceeds in two stages, which are inseparable, but distinct. They are inseparable: for the elements may not be consecrated except to be consumed, and if the first stage has not been completed, the second cannot be fulfilled ; nor is Christ's Death fully shown unless its purpose in our Salvation is further shown by reception of the elements. They are distinct: for the first is our coming to God to show His Son's death; the second is Christ's coming forth to us in God's name to bless and nourish us. These two stages of one Sacrament

corresponds to the descent of the Son of God to unite Himself to us and us to Him in Incarnation and Atonement, and to His ascent in Resurrection and Ascension to the throne of God where He now lives as our Mediator and High-Priest, presenting us in Himself to the Father. In this Sacrament we both are given communion in the Body and Blood of Christ and are lifted up in

Him to the face of the Father who has consecrated for us a new and living way into the Holiest of all.

The Sacrament is thus at once a supreme act of worship and a supreme means of grace.⁴

(A) *It is a supreme act of worship.* To worship God is to show

1 Directory, ut supra, pars. 10 and 11.

Book of Common Order, 1940, 'Order for the Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion' — also in Ordinal and Service Book for use in the Courts of the Church (Appendix, P- 123).

2 Conf. of Faith, xxix. 2. 3 Ibid., xxix. 7.

4 See D. M. Baillie, The Theology of the Sacraments: IV, The Real Presence, and V, The Eucharistic Offering.

forth His worthiness of all service, faith, and love. We show this when we show that God *thus* loved the world.¹ To glorify God is to proclaim what God has done. We may do so in word, as when we stand together and say 'I believe', reciting our Creed to His praise; or when we sing of His mighty acts; or when we declare His everlasting Gospel. But there is a point where words are finished and they fail us: then this still remains—the silence in which we obey Christ who said '*Do this*'. When we stretch out between God's judgement and ourselves the witness of Christ, let that speak for us.² In the heavenly places the ascended Saviour, living unto God, presents Himself before the Father on our behalf, showing His Death and pleading His accomplished sacrifice. He

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is there the 'Lamb as it had been slain',³ 'a propitiation for us'.⁴ In this act we now are one with Him: He is the Head, we are the Body. What He then does personally in the Upper Sanctuary, **He echoes in us on earth as we fulfil His command in making this Memorial:** uniting us to Himself by His Holy Spirit and ministering also in and through us before God. We **are united** with Him in His heavenly priesthood, sacramentally enacting here in His Name that which in the actuality is proper only to Himself.⁵ In recognizing this purpose and effect of the Sacrament we are warned by our standards not to lose sight of its commemorative character. 'In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to His

1 John iii. 16.

2 This is very well expressed in William Bright's Communion Hymn, *Unde et Memores* (*The Church Hymnary*, 320):
And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us, once for all, on Calvary's Tree,
And having with us Him that pleads
above,
We here present, we here spread forth to
Thee That only offering perfect in Thine
eyes, The one true, pure, immortal
sacrifice,
Look, Father, look on His anointed face,
And only look on us as found in Him;
Look not on our misusings of Th y grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so
dim:
For lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the passion of Th y Son our Lord.

3 Rev. v. 6.

4 Rom. iii. 25.

5 We are not to think of Christ's Self-Offering as 'perfecting' and 'completing' our imperfect offerings, but that these are displaced by His completed Self-Offering made on our behalf. We can only offer what has already been offered on our behalf, and offer it by the only mode appropriate to such a substitutionary offering, by prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

ascended Saviour, living unto God, presents Himself before the Father on our behalf, showing His Death and pleading His accomplished sacrifice. He is there the 'Lamb as it had been slain,' 1 'a propitiation for us.' 2 In this act we now are one with Him : He is the Head, we are the Body. What He then does personally in the Upper Sanctuary, He in like manner does by our means on earth : uniting us to Himself by His Holy Spirit and ministering also in and through us before God. We cooperate with Him in His heavenly priesthood, sacramentally enacting here in His Name that which in the actuality is proper only to Himself. In recognising this purpose and effect of the Sacrament we are warned by our standards not to lose sight of its commemorative character. 'In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to His

1 St. John iii. 16.

1 Rev. v. 6.

2 Rom. iii. 25.

Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins.¹ There is 'one Sacrifice for sins for ever',² the Sacrifice of the Cross, offered 'once for all': the only, the full, the perfect, the sufficient satisfaction. To show this very sufficiency is of the essence of what we do. This it is which we plead: that Christ has died, and that His death prevails and has put away sin. There is a pleading; but there is no repetition, no continuing, of Christ's 'sacrifice for sins': nothing added to that of which we are appointed to testify before God that it is finished and is now eternally prevalent.³ The Cross is central to **faith**; and it stands alone. All the ritual of the Old Testament anticipated the Cross, pointing forward to it: all the worship of the New Testament commemorates the Cross, pointing back to it. Christ has still 'somewhat to offer': to have that somewhat belongs to the very nature of His Priesthood; but His Sacrifice is now a 'living sacrifice': it is Himself as alive from the dead that He offers to the Father on our behalf: and in the Sacrament He unites us with Himself in the action of His selfpresentation. And as the Eucharist is thus '*the oblation of all possible praise*', it is also the profoundest *confession of sin*. **A true confession on our part can only be an echo and response to the obedient life and death of Christ who both confessed our sin before God and confessed the righteous judgement of God on our sin. As such He is the High Priest of our confession, our faithful 'Amen' to the Father's judgement inflicted on Him for our sakes, and the merciful 'Amen' of the Father accepting us in Christ on the ground of His sacrifice.⁴ It is therefore in Christ's name alone that we make confession of sin**—because we thus show the cost of mercy, and show at what price we are redeemed, and testify that unless Christ had died for us, we had without doubt perished everlastingly. It is further the utmost *act of prayer*. The appeal to God which faith continually

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because we thus show the cost of mercy,

makes in every supplication—'for Jesus' sake'—

1 Conf. of Faith, xxix. 2.

2 Heb. x. 12.

3 We come to God with empty hands. 'Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to Thy Cross I cling.' At the Holy Supper our hands are filled by the Lord with the bread and wine, the pledges of His unique sacrifice, and so we approach the Father sheltering only in the Name and Sacrifice of our Mediator and Saviour. 'For He alone (saith Ambrose) is our mouth, by whom we speak to God; He is our eyes, by whom we see God, and also our right hand, by whom we offer anything unto the Father.' (John Knox, *A Declaration of the True Nature of Prayer*, Works, III, p. 97).

4 cf. J. McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. 116.

here takes the form of action.¹ We say, Know Thou whether this be Thy Son's Body broken, Thy Son's Blood that was shed, for us.' We say, 'Know Thou whether we be not those sinners for whom Christ died'; into our hands He has put these things, and to us He has said, 'Do This'. We plead His Atonement: as it is written, 'Put me in remembrance; let us plead together'.² And we are called to watch and pray with Christ in his INTERCESSION. Our association with Christ in His prayer is clearly set forth in that He puts His own prayer 'Our Father who art in Heaven' into our mouth.³ That is His atoning prayer in which He identifies Himself with us in our need before God, and identifies us as brothers with Him, the Son of the Father. But because our Lord's atoning prayer was His whole life of Obedience and praise to the Father, as well as His intercessory death on the Cross, He now, risen from the dead, ever lives to make intercession for us. For Christ intercedes 'by His appearing in our nature continually before the Father

and show at what price we are redeemed, and testify that unless Christ had died for us we had without doubt perished everlastingly. It is further the utmost *act of prayer*. The appeal to God which faith continually makes in every supplication—' for Jesus' sake '

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in Heaven in the merit of His obedience and sacrifice';⁴ and in these aspects accordingly of His Person and work we make Memorial of Him in the Sacrament when we DO THIS. **It is thought appropriate that in the midst of 'doing this' the 'Our Father who art in heaven' has its essential place.**

The Eucharist therefore embodies every part of Worship, and is itself the specific worship which Christ has ordained.

(B) This Sacrament is further *a supreme means of grace*. In it our Saviour appears as the Mediator *for us with God*, bringing us with Himself and causing us to take part with Him in His Heavenly Ministry. **But in it** our Saviour **also** appears as the Mediator of the mercies *of God to us*. Through Him the great confession and the great appeal have been made; and now through Him comes the answer. He takes from the Table the consecrated

1 Our Lord's high-priestly prayer (John xvii) belongs to the wholeness of the Supper, and represents His Self-oblation to the Father behind the veil of the outward dramatic action which represents His Self-giving to men. Correspondingly the celebration of the Supper in the Church is to be regarded as the dramatic counterpart on earth which we are commanded to do in His Name as He, our Advocate and Priest, intercedes for us in Heaven on the ground of His unique sacrifice. Through the Spirit who helps our infirmities that heavenly intercession is made to echo ineffably in our Eucharistic intercessions on earth.

2 Isa. xliii. 26.

3 See Calvin's *Sermon on Isaiah*, liii. 12: 'He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.'

4 *Larger Catechism*, 55.

Things, which He has named His Body and Blood,¹ and, giving them to us, makes us partakers of them, so to feed upon Him that He may be one with us

For Christ intercedes ' by His appearing in our nature continually before the Father in Heaven in the merit of His obedience and sacrifice ' ; ² and in these aspects accordingly of His Person and work we make Memorial of Him in the Sacrament when we Do THIS.

The Eucharist therefore embodies every part of Worship, and is itself the specific worship which Christ has ordained.

(B.) This Sacrament is further *the highest means of grace*. In *its earlier stage* our Saviour appears as the Mediator *for us with God*, bringing us with Himself and causing us to take part with Him in His Heavenly Ministry. *In its further stage* our Saviour appears as the Mediator of the Mercies *of God to us*. Through Him the great confession and the great appeal have been made ; and now through Him comes the answer. He takes from the Table the consecrated

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and we with Him, that He may live in us and we in Him.² 'For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.'³ That this might be fulfilled Jesus prayed at the Last Supper in His great high-priestly prayer: 'For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth . . . that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and they in me, that they may be consecrated in one.'⁴

The Church of Scotland teaches that, receiving the Consecrated Elements, we receive Christ's Body and Blood.⁵ In the Sacrament and for its purpose, they are what He has declared them to be.

'Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible Elements in this Sacrament do then also inwardly by Faith, really and indeed, yet not corporally or carnally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all benefits of His Death: The Body and Blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the Bread and Wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the Elements themselves are to their outward senses.'⁶

1 We are to 'eat of *that* Bread' and to 'drink of *that* Cup'. 'That Bread' and 'that Cup' are the Bread and Cup which have been 'taken' and 'blessed' in the sacramental actions of the Holy Table. The use of any other is not 'Communion with the Table of the Lord' (1 Cor. x. 21).

2 *Directory*, 'Celebration of the Communion', par. 8.c. *Book of Common Order*, 1940: 'that the bread which we break may be the Communion of the body of Christ; and the cup of blessing which we bless the Communion of the blood of Christ; that we receiving them, may by faith be made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits . . . to the glory of T h y most holy name'.

3 Heb. ii. 11.

4 John xvii. 19, 23.

2 *Larger Catm.*, 55.

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2 *Directory*, ' Celebration of the Communion,' par. 8. c.

6 See Calvin's *Geneva Catechism*, op. cit., pp. S9f., 62; *The Heidelberg Catechism*, pp. 83^; *Craig's Catechism*, 1581, pp. 154ff.; *The New Catechism*, p. 181.

6. *Conf. of Faith*, xxix. 7. In this the *Westminster Confession* repeats the teaching of the *Scots Confession* of 1560: 'The union and conjunction which we have with the Body and Blood of Christ Jesus in the right use of the Sacraments, wrought by the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carryeth us above all things that are visible, carnall, or earthly, and maketh us to feed upon the Body and Blood of Christ Jesus, which was once broken and shed for us, which is now in Heaven and appeareth in the presence of His Father for us, and yet notwithstanding the far distance of place. . . . we must certainly believe that the Bread which we break is the Communion of Christ's Body, and the Cup which we bless is the Communion of His blood. So that we confess and undoubtedly believe that the Faithful in the right use of the Lord's Table do so eat the Body and drink the Blood of the Lord Jesus that He remaineth in them and they in Him: Yea, they are so made flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone that as the Eternall Godhead hath given to the flesh of Jesus . . . life and immortality: so doth Christ Jesus His flesh and blood eaten and drunk by us give unto us the same prerogative.' God's power takes up the earthly, both the elements of the Sacrament and also ourselves, into the heavenly, where all is real, though nothing is explicable to our senses, and there fulfils His Word on which we trust.

The Church of Scotland thus asserts the presence of the Heavenly part of the Sacrament, as well as of the Earthly part or sign: but refuses to explain the manner of that presence.¹ It is not a physical presence ('carnally or corporally'): it is Spiritual—that is to say, it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit.² The Body and

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Blood are 'really present' because spiritually present; and they are really received by communicants who fulfil the normal conditions of the Sacrament, coming to it in spirit as well as in body. The explanation of the sacramental presence which is offered by the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation ('a change of the substance of Bread and Wine into the substance of Christ's Body and Blood') is definitely set aside as 'overthrowing the nature of the Sacrament'.³ The 'nature of a Sacrament' is to 'have two parts', an earthly as well as a heavenly.⁴ The doctrine of Transubstantiation denies the reality of the earthly part, and, instead of a mystery of Divine grace, leaves only a miracle of Divine power. Consequently the Church of Scotland rejects the extreme inferences which the Church of Rome draws from its doctrine. Our Lord has said of the Consecrated Elements, 'This is My Body', 'This is My Blood'. He has not said of them, 'This Bread, this Wine, is Me'. We believe and teach the truth of what Christ has said. On the same ground (that 'a sacrament has two

1 It can no more be explained than the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, which Catholic theology sets forth only in the great Chalcedonian negatives (*inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter*) in order to guard it against error from all sides. It is in that inexpressible 'mystery of Christ' that we are given to have communion in the Lord's Supper.

2 For a full and clear exposition of this see Robert Bruce's first sermon on the Lord's Supper, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*, pp. 6gff.

We must beware of the looseness of thought which makes 'spiritual' an equivalent for 'imaginary', 'metaphorical', or 'figurative'. A 'spiritual gift' is not an imaginary gift; it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. A 'spiritual person' is not an imaginary person, but a person filled with the Holy Ghost. Christ's Body

Sacrament, as well as of the Earthly part or sign : but refuses to explain the manner of that presence. It is not a physical presence ('carnally or corporally') : it is Spiritual—that is to say, it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit.¹ The Body and Blood are 'really present' because spiritually present; and they are really received by communicants who fulfil the normal conditions of the Sacrament, coming to it in spirit as well as in body. The explanation of the Sacramental presence which is offered by the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation ('a change of the substance of Bread and Wine into the substance of Christ's Body and Blood') is definitely set aside as 'overthrowing the nature of the Sacrament'.¹ The 'nature of a Sacrament' is to 'have two parts,' an earthly as well as a heavenly.² The doctrine of Transubstantiation denies the reality of the earthly part, and, instead of a mystery of Divine grace, leaves only a miracle of Divine power. Consequently the Church of Scotland rejects the extreme inferences which the Church of Rome draws from its doctrine. Our Lord has said of the Consecrated Elements, 'This is My Body,' 'This is My Blood.' He has not said of them, 'This Bread, this Wine, is Me.' We believe and teach the truth of what Christ has said. On the same ground (that 'a sacrament has two

1 'Spiritual' means 'indwelt by the Spirit of God' (Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 72).

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is now spiritual, but it is still His Body. Spiritual presence is not real absence. The spiritual is the real. Faith is not fancy. In the heavenly and eternal sphere which is the background of reality underlying appearances, the sphere of which by our Communion of the Holy Ghost we are inhabitants, the Body and Blood of Christ are present to us, and are given to us. The gift is by the power of God, and takes place objectively and independently of us—as Christ is given for the life of the world, whether the world receive Him or no. *Reception* of the gift is by faith—the spiritual in us meeting and grasping the spiritual content of the Sacrament.

3 *Conf. of Faith*, xxix. 6. Again see R. Bruce, *op. cit.*, pp. 97ff.

4 *Larger Catechism*, 163.

parts') the Church of Scotland equally rejects the doctrine that the elements only symbolize the Body and Blood of Christ. This doctrine denies the reality of the heavenly part of the Sacrament, as the doctrine of Rome denies the earthly, and so is against the nature of a Sacrament, which 'has two parts'.¹ It reduces the Sacrament to be no more than ritual, and would take us back from the spiritual realities of the Gospel Dispensation to the mere symbolism of the Mosaic Dispensation. It is emphatically renounced by the *Scots Confession* of 1560 (ch. xxii: 'We utterly damne the vanitie of them that affirme the Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signes') as well as by the *Confession of Faith*. And it is contrary to the testimony of the Spirit in the Church of God generally. St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 23-29) has stated what is essential in word and action to a valid celebration of the Sacrament. The due fulfilment of the Institution requires (a) the use of the instituted Elements; (b) the use of the instituted Words; (c) the use of the instituted Actions.² What fulfils these conditions is, so far as such conditions

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are concerned, valid. But for reverence and edification something more than this barely valid minimum is requisite—St. Paul himself appears to refer to this, which is to

1 The mystery of the sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified reflects the mystery of Christ, i.e. the union of divine and human natures in His one person, without confusion and without separation. Correspondingly, in the sacramental union, while the sign and the signified reality are to be distinguished they are not to be separated, and while they are to be united they are not to be confounded, that is, converted or transubstantiated into one another. Thus behind both the extremes repudiated by the Church of Scotland lie the deep Christological errors which confound or separate the divine and human natures of Christ. It was on this basis of the doctrine of Christ that Calvin defended the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper—see, for example, *The True Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ (Corpus Reformatorum)* 37, p. 473; or *Comm. on 1 Cor.*, x. 3 (*Corpus Reformatorum* 77, P- 454).

2 It seems to require, also, Thanksgiving as the enveloping character of the whole proceeding, since our Lord's 'giving thanks' was certainly part of the example of which He said, 'This do'. Certain instruments of the Sacrament would also appear to be instituted and unalterable, namely: The Table and the Cup. It is to be noted that Holy Scripture refers only once to the contents of the Cup, 'this fruit of the Vine' (Matt. xxvi. 29); 'the fruit of the Vine' (Mark xiv.

25; Luke xxii. 18), but on all other occasions to the Cup itself. 'He took the Cup' (Matt. xxvi. 27; Mark xiv. 23; Luke xxii. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 25); 'This Cup is the New Testament in My Blood' (Luke xxii. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 25); 'The Cup of blessing which we bless' (1 Cor. x. 16): 'The Cup of the Lord' (1 Cor. x. 21); 'This Cup',

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the Sacrament as the setting to a jewel, or seems, at least, to include it, when he speaks of 'the rest'¹ which he will set in order when he comes to Corinth in person. We know of no time when this devotional surrounding to the Sacrament has been wanting. While it has varied locally in details, it has not, since at least the third century, varied much; but has everywhere consisted

(a) in acts of preparation and approach to the actual Commemoration— psalmody, confession, prayer; the reading of the Scriptural witness to Christ from Prophet, Epistle, and Gospel; the preaching of the Word, the making of offerings, thanksgiving, the recitation of the Passion, invocation of the Holy Spirit, intercession, and the Lord's Prayer; and (b) in acts of thanksgiving and prayer and blessing in sequel to the celebration; and this universal usage, which we know so familiarly, has determined the typical forms of Christian worship generally.² In the Apostolic Church the Sacrament was celebrated every Lord's Day, and its celebration was the occasion of the assembling 'into one place'.³ This is undisputed. The continuance of the usage is testified to by *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*⁴ and by Justin Martyr.⁵ From the fourth century onward, while the Celebration continued, communion by the people became less frequent. The Lateran Council (A.D. 1215) found it necessary to decree that the faithful should communicate at least once in each year; and this, which was tolerated only as a minimum, tended to become the rule. The effect of the Reformation was, on the whole, to restore more frequent

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communicating. The Apostolic practice of weekly celebration was advised and aimed at;⁶ while a monthly celebration was generally treated as a minimum. As regards Scotland the **document** known as the *First Book of Discipline* contemplated only

1 1 Cor. xi. 34.

2 See W. D. Maxwell, *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland*, pp. 59L

3 Acts ii. 42, 46, xx. 7; 1 Cor. xi. 20.

4 *Didache*, xiv.

5 *First Apology*, 67 (a.d. 155).

6 Thus, for example, Calvin: 'Most assuredly the custom which prescribes Communion once a year is an invention of the Devil, by what instrumentality soever it may have been introduced . . . it ought to have been far otherwise. Each week at least the Table of the Lord ought to have been spread for the company of Christians' (*Inst.*, IV. xvii. 4). Again, 'The Sacrament might be celebrated in the most becoming manner if it were dispensed to the Church very frequently, at least once a week.' This language is only typical of that of the Reformers generally. See Appendix D, p. 112.

quarterly Communion, but was not followed; and monthly Communion was at all events suggested by the *Book of Common Order*.¹ According to Alexander Henderson frequency of celebration depended partly on local factors. 'The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is more frequently ministered in some Congregations than in others, according to the number of the communicants, and the proficience of the people in the way of Christ; and in some places upon one Sabbath, in other places upon two or three Sabbaths, as it may be done most conveniently, which is determined by the Minister, and Eldership of the Church.'²

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Episcopalian section with the infrequency of their Communion.³

The Westminster Directory of Public Worship says that 'the Communion or Supper of the Lord is frequently to be celebrated' ; ⁴ and the frequency contemplated is such as ordinarily to supersede the necessity of intimation on a previous Sunday, which would seem to imply the desirability of weekly celebration. Under Puritan influences, which invaded Scotland from England, annual or semi-annual Communion became the rule—and indeed the practice of our Church in this respect has always been below its own standard; but repeated Acts of Assembly have enjoined or pointed to reformation in the matter.⁵ **The custom now is for most churches to have at least four celebrations a year, and some celebrate monthly.**

THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH

These fall into three classes:

- (1) Eucharistic;
- (2) Offices of Prayer;
- (3) Offices of Benediction.

1 Book of Common Order (Knox's Prayer Book), 'Preface to the manner of the administration of the Lord's Supper': 'The day when the Lord's Supper is ministered, which is commonly used once a month.' This, however, was not followed in practice. (See Spratt, *Introduction to Book of Common Order*, p. xlii and Maxwell, op. cit., pp. 51f.)

2 The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland, 1641, p. 20.

3 Holy Communion and Frequency of Celebration, by John Macleod (Edin., 1887), p. 9. Holy communion is always celebrated weekly at St. Giles' Cathedral.

⁴ 'Of the Celebration of the Communion', par. 1.

⁶ *Acts of Assembly*, 1701, xxix.; 1711, vi.; 1724, vi.; 1826, v.; 1837, ult.; 1842, iv.

(1) EUCHARISTIC: This has been

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already considered as the Worship prescribed by our Lord, and as the characteristic Service of the Lord's Day. Its devotional setting has been referred to, as well as the fact that for long ages and in all parts of the Church the constituent elements and the order of this setting have been in general features the same. The Service has, for purpose of historical discussion, been divided into two parts: that 'of the

Catechumens' and that 'of the Faithful'. In early times the former was open to all, the latter only to persons in full communion with the Church.

(a) The 'Service of the Catechumens' is essentially directed to instruction; its central feature is *the Word*, read and preached. Originally there were four readings—from the *Law*, the *Prophet*, the *Apostle*, and the *Gospel*. These were regarded as witnesses to Christ, and the Gospel came last, as of final and complete testimony. In the ordinary usage of the West they have generally been reduced to two—the *Epistle* and *Gospel*, but the Celtic Churches retained the Prophecy. The reading of the Word was generally preceded by Psalmody—often by prayers and confessions of sin; and *Hymns of Praise* answered to each Scripture as soon as it was read.¹ Then followed the *Sermon*, the exposition of the Word read, or of some part of it—usually of the Gospel. Certain acts of Intercession generally closed this part of the Service.

(b) INTERCESSIONS also opened the Service of the Faithful and were followed by the *offering of gifts* (the modern 'Collection'). Then came various prayers, and latterly (i.e. from the fifth century, in the East) the Creed. All of this was regarded as preparatory to the celebration *proper*: the 'entering into the Holiest through the Veil'. The central action of the Service began with the Call, 'Lift up your hearts', followed by the Hymn, 'Holy, Holy, Holy', and by commemorations (1) of God's mighty

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acts (a) in Creation, (6) in Providence, (c) in Salvation, and (2) of the Institution. Next came the solemn Memorial (the *anamnesis*), the Invocation of the Holy Spirit (the *epiclesis*), and the solemn Intercession. In some usages the sacramental actions² are interwoven with these acts of worship, in others they occur later; in one position or the other they of course invariably occur. *The*

1 In the West, from the period of the great Conciliar definitions of Doctrine, the Creed became the responsory to the Gospel.

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Communion follows: that is, the reception of the Consecrated Elements, connected with the *consecration* by the Lord's Prayer, in close dependence on which there follow prayers for personal preparation.¹ After Communion there is *thanksgiving*, perhaps *exhortation*, some act of *praise*, and a final Blessing.² After the Reformation, when it was no longer permitted to celebrate unless Communion of the people was to follow, it became usual in many parts of the Reformed Church to stop the Service after the offerings were collected. It will be seen how like, even if there be no historical connexion,³ this arrested Service is to the ordinary Sunday Morning Service to which we are

accustomed on those Sundays on which Holy Communion is not celebrated.⁴

(2) OFFICES OF PRAYER: It has always been regarded as an indispensable Christian duty that each one of the Faithful in the privacy of his own life should offer daily prayer. This duty includes at the very least prayer every morning and prayer every evening. But, in addition to such private prayer, as the morning and evening sacrifice were offered in the Temple every day, so from very early times the Church has been accustomed similarly to assemble for common Daily Praise and Prayer every

the celebration *proper*: the 'entering into the Holiest through the Veil.' The central action of the Service began with the Call, '*Lift up your hearts*,' followed by the Hymn, '*Holy, Holy, Holy*,' and by commemorations (1) of God's mighty acts (a) in Creation, (b) in Providence, (c) in Salvation, and (2) of the Institution. Next came the solemn Memorial, the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the solemn Intercession. In some usages the sacramental actions¹ are interwoven with these acts of worship, in others they occur later; in one position or the other they of course invariably occur. The

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2 The above is intended only as a summary of the general lines of the typical service. **See Appendix.**

3 Brightman, *The English Rite*, ii. 1,039.

4 See W. Niesel, 'The Order of Public Worship in the Reformed Churches', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 2, 1949, pp. 38iff.

5 The origin of daily *Common Prayer* is not altogether certain, but the fact of its early and constant practice is.

6 Spratt, *Worship and Offices*, p. 263.

evening worship; and in many parishes even on the Lord's Day evening service fell into abeyance. 'The public worship of God was thus reduced to a minimum never before reached in any Christian country.'¹ In recent **decades** evening worship has been restored in **most** rural parishes (it has always continued in towns and larger villages), while daily services begin again to be observed.

(3) SERVICES OF BENEDICTION:

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These are in their nature special and occasional. Their **chief** purpose is the consecration of ourselves to God's service or the ministration of His grace for our need. They may take place independently; or they may be interpolated in the Communion Service or in the abbreviated form of worship which so often occupies the place of the Communion Service.² Ordination, Induction, Admissions to Sacred Office (as of Elder, Deaconess, &c.), Marriage, Confirmation, Reception of Catechumens, Absolutions, Dedications of Churches or of Vessels for Worship, are examples of this species of service.

Funeral Services may perhaps be best classified under this heading. **Nor should it be forgotten that all true Pastoral Visitation should be a service of Benediction in fulfilment of the Minister's sacred office to bless the people from God.**³

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

As has been said ('Sacrament', p. 17) the two Sacraments cover the field of Christian experience in its two great aspects of Entrance into Christ and of Life in Christ. The Christian soul may therefore constantly see its experience reflected and expressed for it in terms of the Sacraments—it may view itself as the Sacraments show it—and may be assured that if it conforms itself to the meaning of the Sacraments, it is conforming to God's will and purpose for it, and is abiding in the way of its calling.⁴

(1) *Baptism*

Reception of Baptism is the normal starting point of the spiritual

¹ Sprott, *Worship and Offices*, p. 263;

never before reached in any Christian country.' ¹ **It is believed that of recent years the tendency is to restore** evening worship in rural parishes (it has always continued in towns and larger villages), while daily services begin again to be observed.

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The Administration of Baptism, though an independent Sacrament, is often so far treated as a service of Benediction as to be included in the course of another service; and

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Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 111

2 See above p. 49.

3 *The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government: Of Pastors. Orders for such services can be found in the Book of Common Order 1940, Ordinal and Service Book for use in the Courts of the Church, 1954, and Let us Pray, 1959. John Baillie's A Diary of Private Prayer is an invaluable guide for personal devotion and sick visiting, as is Kyrie Eleison by H. J. Wotherspoon (Blackwood).*

4 See William Manson, *The Way of the Cross* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1958).

development of the individual soul, and the course of that development exhibits the unfolding of the content of Baptism. This is the view of the Catholic Church, and of the Church of Scotland in its standards. This conception is defined by the Church of Scotland in terms of unusual force and explicitness as the 'improvement of Baptism',¹ which is declared to be 'a duty', and 'to be performed by us all our life long'. This 'improvement' is 'through consideration of its [i.e. Baptism's] nature and ends, of the privileges and benefits conferred thereby, and of its vows'; and by penitence for defect from 'the grace of Baptism' and its 'engagements'. On the basis of Baptism we are to 'grow up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that Sacrament'. We are to 'draw strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized'; to the result 'of the mortifying of sin', and the 'quickening of grace' (of which the presence is assumed, our part being to seek its quickening). As baptized persons we are to 'endeavour to live by faith', and 'to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness. The nurture of the baptized is thus a nurture in the Lord. Its purpose on the Divine side is that the developing self-consciousness of the soul should be, as it were, an awakening in the arms of God—a

of the Sacraments, it is conforming to God's will and purpose for it, and is abiding in the way of its calling.

(1.) *Baptism.*

Reception of Baptism is the normal starting point of the spiritual

1 Sprott, *Worship and Offices*, p. 263.

2 See above, p. 91.

development of the individual soul, and the course of that development exhibits the unfolding of the content of Baptism. This is the view of the Catholic Church, and of the Church of Scotland in its standards. This conception is defined by the Church of Scotland in terms of unsurpassed force and explicitness as the 'improvement of Baptism',¹ which is declared to be 'a duty,' and 'to be performed by us all our life long.' This 'improvement' is 'through consideration of its (i.e. Baptism's) nature and ends, of the privileges and benefits conferred thereby, and of its vows'; and by penitence for defect from 'the grace of Baptism' and its 'engagements.' On the basis of Baptism we are to 'grow up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that Sacrament.' We are to 'draw strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into Whom we are baptized'; to the result 'of the mortifying of sin,' and the 'quickening of grace' (of which the presence is assumed, our part being to seek its quickening). As baptized persons

recognition of God as Father, and of Christ as Saviour, and a recognition of self as child of God and member of Christ. Where Baptism obtains an unhindered fruition, and in the measure in which it does so, life moves from the first within the region of the Spirit, and growth is the growth of the Christian in Christ.

(2) From the Status of the Baptized to the Status of the Communicant

(a) In normal circumstances, the Christian child will grow up to knowledge of truth as it is in Christ, to habits of Christian morality, and towards the cultivation of Christian graces. In the first stages, however, its relation to these must necessarily be passive rather than active. It receives what is delivered to it; it obeys positive precept. The habit of conduct is imposed upon it, rather than formed by a succession of its own acts of choice. The truths believed are accepted rather than embraced.

(b) The good habit and the right belief are not on that account devoid of value. On the contrary, they are of supreme value; for

1 Larger Catechism, 167.

(i) they determine character, and (ii) they prepare the way for that personal adherence to Christ to which all preliminary training is subservient.

(c) But the existence of these habits, the knowledge of these truths, however unquestioningly acquiesced in, do not themselves imply the abandonment of self and the submission to our Lord's demands, the acceptance of the righteousness of God, or the surrender of the will to our Lord's right or possession. Such acts as these are necessary, and can hardly be wholly unconscious in any case; they fall into place as a part of the 'improvement of Baptism'.

(d) This interior **stage** is externally represented in the Sacramental Life by the moment at which the baptized person

we are to 'endeavour to live by faith,' and 'to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness.' The nurture of the baptized is thus a nurture in the Lord. Its purpose on the Divine side is that the developing self-consciousness of the soul should be, as it were, an awakening in the arms of God—a recognition of God as Father, and of Christ as Saviour, and a recognition of self as child of God and member of Christ. Where Baptism obtains

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offers himself for the **renewal** of the Baptismal covenant. He then declares that he understands the **promises of Christ extended to him in Baptism, the renunciations, obligations and professions involved, and that he personally appropriates them.** Upon the basis of this act of **reliance upon the promise of Baptism and of all that has been sealed to him in Baptism,** he seeks recognition by the Church of his right to participate in the full inheritance of grace.

If this declaration and this request are made in full reality, they will imply decision for *Christ* and conversion to *God*, **because, as declared and sealed in his Baptism, Christ had already laid hold of him and had already given to God an account for him. His decision rests upon the prior decision of Christ made on his behalf, and his conversion is the fruit of his adoption and ingrafting into Christ.**

Every effort on the part of the pastor and teacher should be concentrated at this stage to obtain that this result may be a definite and conscious act. It is a lamentable thing if the preparation of Catechumens has to consist only of instruction on the doctrine of the Sacraments, for which time past might have sufficed. The preparation appropriate to this stage is spiritual. Its proper aim should be to ascertain, or to produce, decision and conversion: where these exist, to make the soul conscious of their existence; where they have not been reached, to aid the soul to attain to them. The Christian soul, viewing its life sacramentally, will always connect this step with its self-conscious dedication to our Lord. It may do so with happy and thankful remembrance, or it may do so with penitence, because the full intention of the rite was not apprehended at the time. Nevertheless, the spiritual relation of the succession of ordinance to the stages of the interior life is evident. Sacramentally, this **reappropriation** of the Baptismal covenant corresponds to interior decision for Christ, and personal conscious

the will to our Lord's right or possession. Such acts as these are necessary, and can hardly be wholly unconscious in any case ; they fall into place as a part of the ' improvement of Baptism.'

(d) This interior crisis is externally represented in the Sacramental Life by the moment at which the baptized person offers himself for the completion of the Baptismal covenant. He then declares that he understands the renunciations, obligations, and professions of his Baptism, and that he personally appropriates them. Upon the basis of this act of conscious appropriation of the content of his Baptism he seeks recognition by the Church of his right to participate in the full inheritance of grace.

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response to **His** grace.

(3) *Communion*

Passing now to the Eucharist, the baptized person finds himself engaged in an action in which his life in Christ and its spiritual secret are fully expressed.¹

The whole Gospel is here. To communicate rightly is to live through the act of saving faith. For example:

(a) We see in it the separation to Christ of His Flock, and its isolation in Him from the world. We see that it is to Christ that the Church gathers; He sets Himself in the midst and shows us His Hands and His Side. (b) We see that the basis of faith is the

Incarnation: it is His Body, His Blood, that we are there to receive. We see that Redemption was by redemptive acts: it is His Death that we show. Faith is thus carried back to the days of His flesh, from which faith has its origin. (c) It is also carried upwards to the living Presence of Christ, who is at the right hand of God. Holy Communion is the Sacrament not of His Death only, but also of His Resurrection and Ascension, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost (by which alone it is a Sacrament); and it is the Sacrament of the Christ who shall come again. (d) The celebration of this Sacrament is the worship of the Father by the Son acting in the Church by the Holy Spirit. Here, therefore, we find ourselves set before the glory of the Eternal Trinity.

(e) Further, with regard to ourselves: the celebration is, as already said (**p. 41**), a supreme act of penitence, in which we confess that had not Christ died we must have perished eternally; and (f) a supreme act of faith; for, notwithstanding this confession, we have boldness to enter the Holiest, showing His Death as the **ground** of our acceptance and claiming in its power the forgiveness of sins.

(g) The Sacrament further exhibits Christ in His Mediation of **Salvation** and life. He gives us from His Table—He is at peace with us—we are at peace with Him. Our sins which we have done shall be no more mentioned to us. He absolves. He

do so with happy and thankful remembrance, or it may do so with penitence because the full intention of the rite was not apprehended at the time. Nevertheless, the spiritual relation of the succession of ordinance to the stages of the interior life is evident. Sacramentally, this completion of the Baptismal covenant

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blesses. He brings us to the Father, accepted in Himself. (h) It is shown to us that Christ is Himself the nourishment of our souls. He is the living Bread—as Christ lives by the Father, so he who makes Christ

[1 Compare Heb. x. 19-25.](#)

his food shall live by Christ, (i) In acknowledging and showing this, we perceive that we are become ourselves a living sacrifice to God in Christ. He offers us to His Father as He offers Himself, and we yield ourselves to Him, and our members to be His instruments, vowing ourselves to His holiness. And He enables us to do, as well as to will: for 'He gives more grace'.

(j) Further, we find that except in fellowship with one another we have received none of these things. Much is implied in the refusal of the Church to celebrate the Sacrament except in the Congregation. What each receives, he gives,¹ so that in watching the act of Communion one seems actually to see the circulation of Life in the Body. And thereby each binds himself to deal with the brother as the Lord has dealt with himself; forgiving trespass, covering sin, laying down life for the brother. (k) Further still, Christ is the propitiation not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world, and should be preached to the whole world, Laying hold of Him for its own need, the soul apprehends its debt to remember the need of the world without, for which also Christ died. We are debtors to the world for much kindness; we should do good to all men as we have opportunity; we should not 'eat our morsel alone'—least of all the Bread of God.

In ways like this we can think our whole life into the form of this Sacrament—for all the truth and all the duty of our relation to Christ, and in Christ to God and man, are implied in it; therefore we can think the Sacrament into our whole

celebration is, as already said (p. 76), a supreme act of penitence, in which we confess that had not Christ died we must have perished eternally; and (f) a supreme act of faith; for, notwithstanding this confession, we have boldness to enter the Holiest, showing His Death as the grounds of our acceptance and claiming in its power the forgiveness of sins,

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life, bearing about with us always the dying of the Lord Jesus, and showing His Death by our own death to sin and life to God. We are in spirit constantly to recognize ourselves as the Sacrament shows us— ministering before the Father and testifying of our Lord. To live thus (i) in a Baptismal consciousness, as St. Paul describes it (1 Cor. vi. 11: 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God'), and in the improvement of Baptism as the Church teaches it, (2) in a Eucharistic consciousness as the Epistle to the Hebrews describes it (Heb. x. 19-25: 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us,

1 The social doctrine of the Sacrament has, it may be observed, emphatic expression in the practice of the Scottish Church, by which the communicant receives the Consecrated Elements from the hand of his brother communicant.

through the **veil**, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together')—that is the Sacramental Life: Life stated to oneself in terms of Christ's own choosing, and life which, so far as it **is received and lived** in fact, is necessarily a life which abides in Christ.¹

1 On Infant Baptism, see also Appendix S, p. 125.

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<p>III Doctrine of the Word H O L Y S C R I P T U R E</p> <p>IT pleased the Lord, at sundry times and in divers manners, to reveal Himself and to declare. . . . His will unto His Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary unto salvation.'¹ <i>The Confession of Faith</i> here recognizes the Holy Scriptures as the written Word of God to men in and through which it is God Himself who speaks in person,² but it recognizes also that Revelation was precedent to the Scriptural record. Thus in regard to the New Testament the Revelation was mediated and apprehended, the Christian faith existed and was stated and believed and taught, before the various scriptures it contains were in being.</p>	<p>III DOCTRINE, OR THE WORD H O L Y S C R I P T U R E</p> <p>IT pleased the Lord, at sundry times and in divers manners, to reveal Himself and to declare . . . His will unto His Church ; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church, . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary unto salvation.'¹ <i>The Confession of Faith</i> here recognises the <u>historical fact that revelation is precedent to the Scriptural record, and that the Christian faith existed, and was stated, believed and taught before the New Testament Scriptures were in being.</u></p>
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There was a preparatory revelation to Israel (of which the Old Testament is the record), and there is a complete and supreme revelation in the Person, words, and works of the Lord Jesus

1 Conf. of Faith, i. i.

2 cf. the memorable words of Hugh Binning (*Works*, 173s, pp. 6gf.): 'The Lord speaks to us in Scripture of Himself, according to our capacities, of His Face, His Right Hand and Arm, His Throne, His Sceptre, His Anger, His Fury, His Repentance, His Grief and Sorrow; none of which are properly in His spiritual, immortal and unchangeable nature; but because our dulness and slowness is such in apprehending things spiritual, it being almost without the sphere and comprehension of the soul while in the body, which is almost addicted unto the senses of the body; therefore the Lord accommodates Himself unto our terms and notions; *balbutit nobiscum*, He like a kind Father stammers with His stammering children, speaks to them in their own dialect; but withal would have us conceive He is not really such a One, but infinitely removed in His own Being from all these imperfections. So when ye hear of these terms in Scripture, O beware ye conceive God to be such a one as yourselves; But, in these expressions not beseeming His Majesty, because below Him, learn your own ignorance of His glorious Majesty, your dulness and incapacity to be such, as the Holy One must come down as it were in some bodily appearance ere you can understand anything of Him.'

Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily;¹ which was interpreted and proclaimed by those chosen Apostles and Witnesses whom the Holy Ghost taught and enabled to understand and to express it as an everlasting Gospel. To them 'the Faith' was 'once for all delivered',² and they in turn delivered

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it 'to faithful men who should be able to teach others'.³ Afterwards (as says the *Confession of Faith*) by the care and providence of God, the same was wholly committed to Scripture. The Faith did not make its first appearance in a written but in an oral form: it existed, was preached, believed, and transmitted for some time before it began to have expression in inspired writings. When those writings appeared, they did not supersede the unwritten Faith which the Apostolic witnesses communicated to the Church, nor did they add to it. They are a photograph of that Faith in the process of transmission, and thus became the standard of reference for verifying the content of the Faith. The Tradition of the Apostles expressed itself and took its final form in these Scriptures **in obedience to the Spirit of Truth sent by Christ Himself.**

Thus the Scriptures of the New Testament give us, in regard to the whole Revelation of God, the complete mind of the teaching Church during the age and under the censorship of the Apostles **in its obedient transmission and faithful understanding of the Revelation of Christ in Word and Act.**⁴ They supply us with sections cut across the thought of those men 'who had the mind of Christ'.

The Church teaches that this process of

1 Col. ii. 9. **Because in Jesus Christ God has condescended to reveal and give Himself to us in human form and has reconciled our humanity to Himself, it is by reference to the *Incarnation* that we have to understand the human forms in which Divine Revelation is accommodated to our capacity and adapted to our apprehensions both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. As it is only by the power of**

to faithful men who should be able to teach others.' ³ Afterwards (as says the *Confession of Faith*) by the care and providence of God, the same was wholly committed to Scripture. The Faith did not make its first appearance in a written but in an oral form: it existed, was preached, believed, and transmitted for some time before it began to have expression in inspired writings. When those writings appeared, they did not supersede the unwritten Faith which the Apostolic witnesses communicated to the Church, nor did they add to it. They are a photograph of that Faith in the process of transmission, and thus became the standard of reference for verifying the content of the Faith. The Tradition of the Apostles expressed itself and took its final form in these Scriptures.

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They supply us with sections cut across the thought of those men 'who had the mind of Christ.' **For all subsequent generations the New Testament Scriptures fill the place which in the first generation was occupied by the living voice and authority of Christ's 'chosen witnesses.'**

The Church teaches that this process of

1 Col. ii. 9.

the Spirit that we are enabled to recognize Jesus as Lord, so it is only by the power of the same Spirit that we are able to recognize the human speech of the Bible as the Word of God. This method of understanding and interpreting Holy Scripture is known in Reformed theology as *according to the analogy of faith*.

2 Jude 3.

3 2 Tim. ii. 2.

4 In the Epistles of St. Paul we can discover the whole process of operation: (a) He 'delivers' (as he has received) the fundamental facts of the Gospel (e.g. 1 Cor. xv. 1-8).

(4) He authoritatively deduces inferences from these and states them dogmatically (*ibid.*, 21-28, 42-54).

(c) He tries and judges opinion and teaching as it emerges in the Church (*ibid.*, 12-19, 29-41).

(d) He reasons from Christian truth to the Christian Spirit and practice (*ibid.*, 55-58)—'the way of the Lord Jesus'.

record was wholly providential, not accidental.¹ It proceeded under the Hand of God, and by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. **Thus the New Testament Scriptures are the instrument divinely elected and formed, the authentic means, of God's Revelation to His Church in all ages. They fill the place which in the first generation was occupied by the living voice and authority of Christ Himself through His chosen witnesses, for through them wherever they are proclaimed or expounded from generation to generation it is the same living Christ who declares His Word, reveals and offers Himself as Saviour and Lord.**²

'The authority of Holy Scripture' accordingly, 'for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the teaching of any man or Church, but wholly upon God . . . and therefore is to be received, because it is the Word of God.'³ In submitting itself to the rule

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of the Scriptures, it is to the Divine Council that conscience bows, not to the Ecclesiastical or even to the Apostolic mind: and it is to Divine Promise that the heart adheres. Holy Scripture bears in itself the evidence of this Divine origin and sanction; it carries with it 'the testimony of the Holy Spirit'. The Christian experience of every age has verified this statement, so that the Church universally and unhesitatingly affirms Scripture to be the Word of God. 'Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and Divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.'⁴ Divine care, then, stood over the historical process of record, and a divine appointment moved within it; these together ensuring the result that the Scriptures **faithfully mediate God's Revelation and fully** cover the whole field occupied by the Faith.

Nothing may be taught as requisite to salvation, or imposed as a term of communion with the Church, which cannot be discovered in Scripture and verified as part of its teachings. 'The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.'⁶

1 'It pleased the Lord . . . to commit the same . . . unto writing' (*Conf. Of Faith*, i. 1).

2 See T. H. L. Parker, *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth*, pp. 21-7.

3 *Conf. of Faith*, i. 4.

4 *Ibid.*, i. 5.

5 *Ibid.*, i. 6.

The duty of the Church towards the Scriptures, is, accordingly, twofold. She has (1) to preserve them inviolate and to

be received, because it is the Word of God.'² In submitting itself to the rule of the Scriptures, it is to the Divine Counsel that conscience bows, not to the Ecclesiastical or even to the Apostolic mind: and it is to Divine Promise that the heart adheres. Holy Scripture bears in itself the evidence of this Divine origin and sanction ; it carries with it ' the testimony of the Holy Spirit.' The Christian experience of every age has verified this statement, so that the Church universally and unhesitatingly affirms Scripture to be the Word of God. ' Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and Divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.'¹ Divine care, then, stood over the historical process of record, and a divine appointment moved within it; these together ensuring the result that the Scriptures cover the whole field occupied by the Faith.

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1 *Conf. of Faith*, i. 6.

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be the jealous guardian of their letter: (2) to teach and command, altogether and only, in agreement with what they authorize—to make them the test of her rule of Faith and Morals, guided always by the standard of *It is written*, to open out their contents to her own children, showing always that what she teaches they approve as the Apostolic Gospel, and to promulgate them to the world, as law of liberty and as containing the very word of God'.¹ The Church stands to the Divine Law as a steward, not as a master.²

CREED OF THE CHURCH

(1) What is 'Creed'?

The Faith of the Church which is contained in Holy Scripture is set forth in its essentials in the 'Creeds'. The Word 'Creed' is limited in proper use to mean a statement of those beliefs which, when held by a man, make him in faith a Christian, and are necessary to him as a Christian. 'Creed' means *the Faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints; 'the Gospel' . . . which ye have received, and wherein ye stand*'.³

(2) Creed and Gospel

The Gospel was taught at first orally, that is, by word of mouth. It had many teachers, but was recognized as one Faith:⁴ its teachers were in agreement in stating it, as its disciples were in receiving it. For purposes of testing and ascertaining agreement, the Gospel must have received formulated statement. There is abundant evidence in the New Testament of this formulation. When St. Paul, e.g., 'communicated' to Saints Peter, James, and John at Jerusalem 'that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles',⁵ and when the truth of his presentation of the Gospel was acknowledged by them, he and they must have enunciated and compared the points, historical and doctrinal, which all of them alike made the basis of their

Scriptures is, accordingly, twofold. She has (1) to preserve them inviolate and to be the jealous guardian of their letter: (2) to teach and command, altogether and only, in agreement with what they authorise—to make them the test of her rule of Faith and Morals, guided always by the standard of *It is written*, to open out their contents to her own children, showing always that what she teaches they approve as the Apostolic Gospel, and to promulgate them to the world, as the law of liberty and as containing the very word of God.'² The Church stands to the Divine Law as a steward, not as a master.³

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evangelization. St. Paul, again, had not himself

1 **H. J. Wotherspoon**, *Pentecostal Gift* (Maclehose, Glasgow, 1903), p. 74.

2 'The Church cannot legislate upon doctrine, in the common sense of the term. Her legislation of that class, to be legitimate, can be nothing but construing—construing the Word of God according to the analogy of the Faith' (W. E. Gladstone, *Correspondence upon the Church, &c.*, i. 109).

3 Jude 3; 1 Cor. xv. 1.

4 1 Cor. xv. 2.

5 Gal. ii. 2.

visited Rome, when he wrote his Epistle to the Romans; but he is able to assume that Roman Christians both know and hold a body of fact and truth common to them and him as to other believers.¹ He calls this 'the pattern of teaching to which they had been delivered',² and commends them for their obedience to it. As St. Paul did not found the Roman Church, the 'pattern' had not been 'delivered' by him, and his knowledge and mention of it **point** to the existence of an outline of the essentials of the Faith, generally recognized.³ So, again, his words to the Corinthians⁴ imply his own use of an ordered form of presenting the Gospel, and the identity of this with a form recognized as authoritative. 'Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached': he had, therefore, given them the Gospel in a form definite and orderly, so as to be retained in the memory. What he delivered to them was what he himself had 'received', and he is confident that he can tell what any other true Evangelists who had visited them must have taught: 'therefore', he says, 'whether it were I or they, so we preached'. This appeal to memory, this challenge regarding the teaching which others gave, could hardly be possible

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unless there were a form of essentials to which St. Paul had regard, and to which he knew that other Evangelists would have had regard in preaching the Gospel. From this recognized presentation of Christianity St. Paul instances so much as is germane to his immediate topic, namely, the Resurrection of the Dead—'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures'.⁵ St. Paul, again, urges St. Timothy to hold fast 'the form of sound words'⁶ (the 'good thing committed to him'), and he repeatedly refers to the 'teaching'—the things that Timothy had heard—which he was to deliver to others as they had been delivered to him. This form of teaching or deposit can hardly be other than the 'good confession'⁷ of Christ, which Timothy is reminded he had witnessed before many witnesses. That, again, must be identified with⁸ 'the faith once for all delivered to the

1 Rom. vi. 17.

2 Rom. vi. 17, R.V.; cf. xvi. 17.

3 'The Apostles and Evangelists who went about two by two . . . must have had a fixed basis for the instruction they gave' (Soltau, *Unsere Evangelieten*, p. 85, quoted by J. Denney, *The Death of Christ*, p. 81).

4 1 Cor. xv. 1.

5 1 Cor. xv. 9.

6 2 Tim. i. 13, 14, ii. 2, iii. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 20.

7 1 Tim. vi. 12.

8 Heb. x. 23.

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(3) *The Apostles' Creed*²

The particular occasion of the consolidation of this oral Gospel into the form of confession of personal belief arose in the requirement of such a

challenge regarding the teaching which others gave, could hardly be possible unless there were a form of essentials to which St. Paul had regard, and to which he knew that other Evangelists would have had regard in preaching the Gospel. From this recognised presentation of Christianity St. Paul instances so much as is germane to his immediate topic, namely, the Resurrection of the Dead—'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.'¹ St. Paul, again, urges St. Timothy to hold fast 'the form of sound words'² (the 'good thing committed to him'), and he repeatedly refers to the 'teaching'—the things that Timothy had heard—which he was to deliver to others as they had been delivered to him. This form of teaching or deposit can hardly be other than the 'good confession'³ of Christ, which Timothy is reminded he had witnessed before many witnesses. That, again, must be identified with¹ 'the faith once for all delivered to the

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(3.) *The Apostles' Creed*³

The particular occasion of the consolidation of this oral Gospel into the

<p>confession from Catechumens at the time of their Baptism.³ The Catholic Creeds—'Apostles' and 'Nicene'—are in part, at least, expansions of the Baptismal formula delivered to us by our Lord—the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The candidate was originally required to state his faith as to each of the three Divine Persons: 'What believest thou of the Father? What believest thou of the Son? What believest thou of the Holy Ghost?' In course of time the replies which candidates were instructed to make coalesced into one consecutive statement which was known as the <i>Symbolum</i> or pass-word, possibly so-called as the grounds of recognition at the gate of the fold, and as the bond of disciple with disciple. Frequently this formula of faith was not communicated until the eve of Baptism. It was transmitted orally, being seldom committed to writing in the earlier ages, in order to preserve its character as 'the pass-word' and also to protect it from possible profanation by heathen opponents. As late as the fifth century, St. Augustine says in regard to this, 'Let your memory be your book'. Hence there is difficulty in tracing the history of the Creed in the first age. But the primitive existence of such a formula, and its direct descent from our Lord's own words at the Institution of Baptism, are sufficiently clear.⁴ Being unwritten and in constant use, while it</p> <p>¹ Jude 3. ² As to the name 'Apostles' Creed', at the close of the fourth century a tradition existed that this symbol was produced by the Apostles in collaboration, each one of the Twelve contributing a clause or article. There is no ground for this explanation of the title. It may be truly called the Apostles' Creed, however, as being (a) in full agreement with the Apostolic Gospel, and as being (b) the historical descendant and representative of the Gospel message as originally cast</p>	<p>form of confession of personal belief arose in the requirement of such a confession from Catechumens at the time of their Baptism.⁴ The Catholic Creeds — 'Apostles' and 'Nicene'—are <u>both</u> expansions of the Baptismal formula delivered to us by our Lord—the <u>NAME</u> of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The candidate was originally required to state his faith as to each of the three Divine Persons : 'What believest thou of the Father ? What believest thou of the Son ? What believest thou of the Holy Ghost ? ' In course of time the replies which candidates were instructed to make coalesced into one consecutive statement which was known as the <i>Symbolum</i> or pass-word, possibly so-called as the grounds of recognition at the gate of the fold, and as the bond of disciple with disciple. This formula of faith was not communicated until the eve of Baptism. It was transmitted orally, being seldom committed to writing in the earlier ages, in order to preserve its character as ' the pass-word ' and also to protect it from possible profanation by heathen opponents. As late as the fifth century, St. Augustine says in regard to this, ' Let your memory be your book.' Hence there is difficulty in tracing the history of the Creed in the first age. But the primitive existence of such a formula, and its direct descent from our Lord's own words at the Institution of Baptism, are sufficiently clear.¹ Being unwritten and in constant use, while it</p> <p>² Jude 3. ³ As to the name 'Apostles' Creed,' at the close of the fourth century a tradition existed that this symbol was produced by the Apostles in collaboration, each one of the Twelve contributing a clause or article. There is no ground for this explanation of the title. It may be truly called the Apostles'</p>
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into form suitable for delivery by word of mouth. For a careful analysis of the formation of the Creed see Oscar Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*.

3 St. Paul's reference to Timothy's confessing the good confession before many witnesses is, almost unquestionably, a reference to his Baptism.

4 St. Paul's language in 1 Cor. xv. 3-4 strongly suggests that of the corresponding clauses in the Creed. St. Ignatius, writing during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117), often uses phraseology which seems reminiscent of its form and substance (cf. Epp. *ad Ephes.*, vii, xvii, *ad Trail.*, ix, *ad Smyrn.*, i).

was substantially the same everywhere, its precise terms varied in different Churches and regions, and many versions are extant. The 'Apostles' Creed', as used by us, is one of these versions—the ancient Roman—completed by the addition of clauses from those of other Churches.¹ Throughout the Eastern Churches all other symbols have, since the fourth century, been superseded by the Nicene, but in the Western Churches the Apostles' Creed has continued to be used along with the Nicene both as a basis of catechizing and in worship, and it is universally accepted by them.

(4) *The Nicene Creed*²

The 'Nicene Creed' is the deliberately accepted formula of Faith for the whole Catholic Church. The Apostles' Creed is a traditional and spontaneous outgrowth of the life and practice of the Church; the Nicene is the result of consultation and resolution. It gives larger expression to the truths of the Divine Person, and of the Divine and Human Natures of our Saviour, and of the Divine Person of the Holy Ghost. These truths, having been made subjects of dispute, were asserted

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(5) *Function of the Creeds*

The Catholic Creeds, which are abundantly verified by Holy Scripture, and teach only what the Scriptures prove, constitute an additional witness to the primitive Gospel. The Books of the New Testament present us with the Faith as it was *taught*, and as it was applied by individuals to particular circumstances and needs. The Creeds preserve the Faith as it was *received* by the body of the

1 The latest of these additions was made about A.D. 650.

2 See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Longmans, 1950).

3 Strictly speaking, the name is inaccurate. Our 'Nicene Creed', based apparently on the Baptismal Creed of the Church of Jerusalem, was promulgated by the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) co-ordinately with the somewhat different form originally published by the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325). But the former was in existence before the date of the Council of Constantinople (381).

Church, and the sense in which it was understood by those who received it. The Creeds represent the agreement of the body of the Members as to what they had been taught—how they had 'learned Christ', and what they found necessary and sufficient as a foundation of Christian hope and life. The Holy

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<p>Scriptures and the Catholic Creeds have a parallel but distinct descent from the oral Apostolic teaching of the first age, which they directly represent. The Creeds were not formed merely by a process of extraction from Scripture, but have flowed down to us by the channel of the continuous life of the Church, from the fountain of the original 'delivery of the Faith', 'which it pleased the Lord afterwards to commit to writing'¹ in the form of the New Testament. The Creeds serve the supremely important end of indicating and emphasizing, amid the abundant variety and detail of Scripture, those matters which were recognized from the first as truly 'fundamental' and 'essential'—such as our Church has called the 'grand mysteries of the Gospel' and 'the great and fundamental truths'.² It is by no means impossible to express in language which is entirely scriptural systems of doctrine widely divergent from each other, yet all of them alien to that truth which created and has sustained the Church. Most heresies have professed to argue from Scripture. But the authority possessed by a collection of extracts from Scripture is not the authority of Scripture, but only such as may be attached to the theological competency, religious judgment, and personal tendencies of the individual who determines the selection. The Catholic Creeds furnish the Church with a safeguard, and give the Christian a protection against attempts of the kind. In them we see the Church fulfilling two of its essential functions—in the Apostles' Creed providing for the instruction and testing of candidates for her membership: in the Nicene, for the rejection of false additions to the truth, and of erroneous explanations of the mysteries of the Faith.</p> <p>(6) <i>The Creeds in the Reformed Church</i></p> <p>At the Reformation the Catholic Creeds</p>	<p>body of the Members as to what they had been taught—how they had 'learned Christ,' and what they found necessary and sufficient as a foundation of Christian hope and life. The Holy Scriptures and the Catholic Creeds have a parallel but distinct descent from the oral Apostolic teaching of the first age, which they directly represent. The Creeds were not formed merely by a process of extraction from Scripture, but have flowed down to us by the channel of the continuous life of the Church, from the fountain of the original 'delivery of the Faith,' 'which it pleased the Lord afterwards to commit to writing' ¹ in the form of the New Testament. The Creeds serve the supremely important end of indicating and emphasising, amid the abundant variety and detail of Scripture, those matters which were recognised from the first as truly 'fundamental' and 'essential'—such as our Church has called the 'grand mysteries of the Gospel' and 'the great and fundamental truths.' ¹ It is by no means impossible to express in language which is entirely scriptural systems of doctrine widely divergent from each other, yet all of them alien to that truth which created and has sustained the Church. Most heresies have professed to argue from Scripture. But the authority possessed by a collection of extracts from Scripture is not the authority of Scripture, but only such as may be attached to the theological competency,</p> <p>religious judgment, and personal tendencies of the individual who determines the selection. The Catholic Creeds furnish the Church with a safeguard, and give the Christian a protection against attempts of the kind. In them we see the Church fulfilling two of its essential functions—in the Apostles' Creed providing for the instruction and testing of candidates for her membership : in the Nicene, for the rejection of false additions to the truth, and of erroneous explanations of the mysteries of the Faith</p>
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<p>remained in full authority, and were, at the least, assumed as the basis and background of all the various 'Confessions' of the Reformed Churches.</p> <p><i>1 Conf. of Faith, i. 1; see Article on Scripture.</i> <i>2 Acts of Assembly, 1696 and 1720.</i></p> <p>Those to which the name 'Reformed'¹ was distinctively applied, amongst which was the Church of Scotland, made this adherence explicit and formal in the great historical document adopted by them in testimony of their common orthodoxy and of their Catholic position.² All their Catechisms took the form of exposition of the Apostles' Creed, and provided for its repetition. Their worship constantly included it. In the Church of Scotland, the 'Book of Common Order'³ prescribed its recitation after Sermon in all ordinary services. The law of the Church required that it should be professed by sponsors at Baptism, and ability to repeat it was a condition of admission to the Lord's Table.⁴ The Scottish representatives at the Westminster Assembly contended vehemently for the retention of these usages, but, in face of opposition from English Puritanism, were able to secure only, and with difficulty, that the Creed should be retained as a catechetical standard contingent with the Shorter Catechism.⁶ The contents of both Apostles' and Nicene Creeds are embodied, even to their most technical phraseology, in the Westminster Standards, both the <i>Confession</i> and the <i>Catechisms</i>.⁶ For present usage the Church of Scotland has authorized the <i>Directory for the Public Worship of God</i>, and <i>The Book of Common Order</i>, 1940. The former remains its authoritative Directory, the latter is the accepted Service book of the Church in common use. In it the Apostles' Creed is prescribed for the weekly service, and the</p>	<p>(6.) <i>The Creeds in the Reformed Church.</i></p> <p>At the Reformation the Catholic Creeds remained in full authority, and were, at the least, assumed as the basis and background of all the various 'Confessions' of the Reformed Churches.</p> <p><i>1 Conf. of Faith, I. i., see Article on Scripture.</i> <i>1 Acts of Assembly, 1696 and 1720.</i></p> <p>Those to which the name 'Reformed' ¹ was distinctively applied, amongst which was the Church of Scotland, made this adherence explicit and formal in the great historical document adopted by them in testimony of their common orthodoxy and of their Catholic position.² All their Catechisms took the form of exposition of the Apostles' Creed, and provided for its repetition. Their worship constantly included it. In the Church of Scotland, the 'Book of Common Order' ³ prescribed its recitation after Sermon in all ordinary services. The law of the Church required that it should be professed by sponsors at Baptism, and ability to repeat it was a condition of admission to the Lord's Table.¹ The Scottish representatives at the Westminster Assembly contended</p> <p>vehemently for the retention of these usages, but, in face of opposition from English Puritanism, were able to secure only, and with difficulty, that the Creed should be retained as a catechetical standard contingent with the Shorter Catechism.² The contents of both Apostles' and Nicene Creeds are embodied, even to their most technical phraseology, in the Westminster Standards, both the <i>Confession</i> and the <i>Catechisms</i>.³ For present usage the Church of Scotland has <u>no authorised forms of worship, but <i>Eucliologion</i>, a book of Services issued by the Church Service Society.</u>¹ uses the Apostles' Creed in every daily Service, and the Nicene</p>
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<p>Nicene or Apostles' Creed for use in the Communion Service.</p> <p>The Nicene Creed is recited in the Communion Service used by the General Assembly.</p> <p>FAITHFULNESS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TO CATHOLIC DOCTRINE</p> <p>'Catholic Doctrine' means the doctrine of the Catholic Creeds, especially as concerns the Trinity of the Godhead and the Deity</p> <p>1 I.e. in the technical language of the time, as distinct from 'Protestant' or 'Lutheran'.</p> <p>2 <i>The Second Helvetic Confession</i>, v., chapter on 'Faithfulness', &c.</p> <p>3 Called 'Knox's Liturgy'.</p> <p>4 See Sprott, <i>Worship and Offices</i>, pp. 65, 84, W. D. Maxwell, <i>History of Worship in the Church of Scotland</i>, pp. 58, 61, 62 (see footnote quotation from J. M. Barkley).</p> <p>5 In the standard editions of the Catechism a note is appended to the Creed explaining, <i>inter alia</i>, that it is 'annexed', 'because it is a brief sum of the Christian Faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the Churches of Christ'.</p> <p>6 See as to this the chapter on 'Faithfulness', &c.</p> <p>of our Saviour, and of the unchallenged Ecumenical Councils concerning His Person and natures. The Reformation everywhere assumed and proceeded upon this Doctrine and sought not only to rehabilitate it but to reform the life and faith of the Church in accordance with it.</p> <p>Every Reformed Communion propounded its 'Confession'—often one Confession after another—both to proclaim its adherence to Apostolic and Catholic doctrine and to bring the</p>	<p><u>Creed in the Communion Service.</u></p> <p>The Nicene Creed is recited in the Communion Service used by the General Assembly.</p> <p>FAITHFULNESS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TO CATHOLIC DOCTRINE</p> <p>'Catholic Doctrine' means the doctrine of the Catholic Creeds, especially as concerns the Trinity of the Godhead and the Deity</p> <p>1 I.e. in the technical language of the time, as distinct from 'Protestant' or 'Lutheran.'</p> <p>2 <i>The Second Helvetic Confession</i>, v., chapter on 'Faithfulness,' etc.</p> <p>3 Called 'Knox's Liturgy.'</p> <p>1 See Sprott, <i>Worship and Offices</i>, pp. 65, 84.</p> <p>2 In the standard editions of the Catechism a note is appended to the Creed explaining, <i>inter alia</i>, that it is 'annexed,' 'because it is a brief sum of the Christian Faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the Churches of Christ.'</p> <p>3 See as to this the chapter on 'Faithfulness,' etc., pp. 74-78</p> <p>1 Comprising over six hundred ministers in its membership !!</p> <p>of our Saviour, and of the unchallenged Ecumenical Councils concerning His Person and natures. The Reformation everywhere assumed and proceeded upon this Doctrine.</p> <p>Every Reformed Communion propounded its 'Confession' — often one Confession</p>
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confessing Church into living conformity to the Word of God; but every Reformed Communion maintained its relation to the Creeds unaltered, and the various Confessions were supplementary to the Creeds. The Catechisms, also, in which the Reformation was prolific, are without exception expositions of the Baptismal Symbol supplemented by the Nicene Creed.

The Church of Scotland occupied no other position towards Catholic Doctrine than did the other Reformed Communions. To Catholic Doctrine its relation is absolutely regular and clear. As already stated, the Apostles' Creed continued without interruption to be recited in its services and to be required in the administration of Baptism. The same Creed was its basis of religious instruction. The Catechisms (namely, *of Geneva and Heidelberg*) authorized in the first period of the Reformed Church of Scotland *are*, in *their* doctrinal parts, based upon this Creed, article by article. *The same applies to all the official Catechisms of the Church of Scotland until the acceptance of the Westminster standards.*

The Apostles' Creed is and has always been a catechetical standard, and, *although its order was not followed by the longer and shorter Catechisms of Westminster, it was annexed to them* 'because it is a brief sum of the Christian Faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the Churches of Christ'.

FORMAL RELATION OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TO THE NICENE CREED AND THE COUNCILS

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The Church of Scotland occupied no other position towards Catholic Doctrine than did the other Reformed Communions. To Catholic Doctrine its relation is absolutely regular and clear. As already stated, the Apostles' Creed continued without interruption to be recited in its services and to be required in the administration of Baptism. The same Creed was its basis of religious instruction. The Catechism (namely, *Calvin's*) authorised in the first period of the Reformed Church of Scotland *is*, in *its* doctrinal parts, based upon this Creed, article by article.

The Apostles' Creed is and has always been a catechetical standard, and, *as such, is*

annexed to *the Longer and Shorter Catechisms* 'because it is a brief sum of the Christian Faith agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the Churches of Christ.'

FORMAL RELATION OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TO THE NICENE CREED AND

<p>(1) One of the earliest Acts of the General Assembly after the Reformation was to adhere, along with the Reformed Churches of Hungary, Poland, France, Switzerland, and the Palatinate, to a Confession known as the <i>Second Helvetic</i>, which was expressly designed to exhibit their agreement in orthodoxy. This declares in the Eleventh Chapter: We sincerely believe and freely profess whatsoever Things are defined out of the Holy Scriptures in the Creeds, and in the decrees of those first four and most excellent Councils—held at Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon—together with blessed Athanasius' Creed, and all Creeds like to these; touching the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we condemn all things contrary to the same. Thus [it is continued] we retain the Christian sound and Catholic Faith, whole and inviolable, knowing that nothing is contained in the aforesaid Creeds which is not agreeable to the Word of God, and makes wholly for the uncorrupt declaration of the Faith. The Helvetic Confession makes in its preface a claim and protest that inasmuch as all its signatories are of the Faith and religion specified in the ancient laws of Christendom as Catholic: 'They shall be held not for heretics, but for Catholics and Christians.' The signatories in Scotland included Knox, Craig, Winram, and Row, who thus adhered to the profession of Catholic doctrine, and to the claim that they were Catholic Christians. The adherence of the Scottish Reformers to these statements of the Helvetic Confession was ratified in two subsequent Assemblies, of which one was the Glasgow Assembly of 1638. No corporate action of the Church has been more deliberate, none possesses more authority, than this by which the Church asserts its right to the name of Catholic, and its possession of Catholic Doctrine.</p> <p>(2) It is certain that 'the Westminster</p>	<p>THE COUNCILS</p> <p>(1.) One of the earliest Acts of the General Assembly after the Reformation was to adhere, along with the Reformed of Hungary, Poland, France, Switzerland, and the Palatinate, to a Confession known as the <i>Second Helvetic</i>, which was expressly designed to exhibit their agreement in orthodoxy. This declares in the Eleventh Chapter :— 'We sincerely believe and freely profess whatsoever Things are defined out of the Holy Scriptures in the Creeds, and in the decrees of those first four and most excellent Councils—held at Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon—together with blessed Athanasius' Creed, and all Creeds like to these; touching the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we condemn all things contrary to the same.' ' Thus,'<u>it is continued,</u>' we retain the Christian sound and Catholic Faith, whole and inviolable, knowing that nothing is contained in the aforesaid Creeds which is not agreeable to the Word of God, and makes wholly for the uncorrupt declaration of the Faith.' The Helvetic Confession makes in its preface a claim and protest that inasmuch as all its signatories are of the Faith and religion specified in the ancient laws of Christendom as Catholic, ' They shall be held not for heretics, but for Catholics and Christians.' The signatories in Scotland included Knox, Craig, Winram, and Row, who thus adhered to the profession of Catholic doctrine, and to the claim that they were Catholic Christians. The adherence of the Scottish Reformers to these statements of the Helvetic Confession was ratified in two subsequent Assemblies, of which one was the Glasgow Assembly of 1638. No corporate action of the Church has been more deliberate, none possesses more authority than this by which the Church asserts its right to the name of Catholic, and its possession of Catholic Doctrine.</p>
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Confession contains everything that is in the Nicene Creed'.¹ Those matters of doctrine which concern the Person and Natures of the Redeemer,² which were defined by the Councils of Ephesus, Chalcedon and Constantinople, are treated by the Westminster Confession in the very terms employed by these Councils.³ In their doctrine of the Holy Trinity, of the work as well as the Person of Christ, of man and of salvation, the Confessions both of 1560 and of 1647 follow the teaching of the great theologian for the East, Athanasius, and the teaching of the great doctor of the West, Augustine, universally recognized as authoritative teachers in the Church Catholic.

(3) Not only in the Westminster Confession (1647): the Scots Confession of 1560 is equally explicit, as follows: 'We acknowledge and confess one only God, to whom we must cleave

¹ James Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 1908, pp. 391-2.

² *Conf. of Faith*, ii. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, viii. 1, 2, 'The Person of Christ'.

and serve, whom we must worship, in whom only we must put our trust, who is eternal, infinite, incomprehensible, omnipotent, One in substance yet in Three Persons, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, by whom we believe and confess all things in heaven and earth, as well visible as invisible, to have been created' (Art. I). 'When the fulness of time came, God sent His Son, His eternal Wisdom, the substance of His own glory, into this world, who took the nature of manhood of the substance of woman, to wit of a Virgin, and that by operation of the Holy Ghost, and so was born the just seed of David, the very Messiah promised, whom we confess and acknowledge Immanuel, Very God and Very Man, two perfect natures united and joined in One Person, by which our confession we condemn the . . . pestilent heresies of Arius, Marcion,

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Augustine, whose orthodoxy and Catholicism have not been questioned.

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Eutyches, Nestorius, and such others, as did either deny the eternity of His Godhead, or the Verity of His human nature, or confounded them, or yet divided them' (Art. VI).

The Church of Scotland has constantly adhered to her Confession. To James II her Presbyterian Ministers avowed that 'their principles were, according to the Word of God, contained in that Confession'.¹ Under William III she had it established by law as her public and avowed confession. Under Anne she insisted that it should be ratified and confirmed in the Act of Union of 1707. When, on two occasions after the Revolution, she felt called upon to speak of the things in the Confession that she deemed most essential—against the Deists in 1696, and to enjoin upon her ministers the preaching of the catechetical doctrine in 1720—it was on the doctrines common to the Confession with the Ancient Creeds that in both cases, she laid primary stress, in the earlier Act enumerating first among the 'grand Mysteries of the Gospel', 'the Incarnation of the Messiah'; and in the later, 'the great and fundamental truths according to our Confessions and Catechisms, such as that of the Being and Providence of God, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, the necessary doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead, and particularly the eternal Deity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. When at a later period of the same century, there appeared some likelihood of an infection of Scotland by the Arianism and Socinianism which were already current among the English and Irish Presbyterians, the Moderates, under the wise leadership of Principal Robertson, refused to listen to proposals for changing the Confession.

¹ Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol. iii, p. 11 n.

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The Evangelical Seceders from 1733 to 1843 were of the like mind; one and all they took the Confession and the Catechisms with them; and in many a case of alleged heresy—from that of Simson to that of Edward Irving—both parties in the Church insisted, without a moment's wavering, that, whatever else was fundamental, the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, 'according to our Confession of Faith', were so most certainly. The Assembly of 1889 passed a Declaratory Act which, while 'desiring to enlarge rather than curtail any liberty heretofore enjoyed, and to relieve subscribers from unnecessary burdens as to forms of expression and matters which do not enter into the substance of Faith', 'declared at the same time the adherence of the Church to the Confession of Faith as its public and avowed Confession, and containing the sum and substance of the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches'. The Act of Parliament which the Church obtained in 1905 recognizes (and may be thought to reinforce) the position which the **Westminster** Confession has held among us since 1647 and 1690.¹

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND: ITS HISTORY AS A BRANCH OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The origin of the Scottish Branch of the Catholic Church dates from the period of the occupation of Britain by Imperial Rome. The Christianity then imported by soldiers and colonists extended on the

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Bishop Harold Browne (*Thirty-Nine Articles*) was justified in saying that ' while the various bodies of Presbyterian Christians both in Great Britain and on the Continent, have had a considerable tendency to lapse into Socinianism,' the Church of Scotland is an exception, and ' has maintained a most honourable superiority to all other Presbyterians, partly no doubt because, unlike the generality of them, she strictly guards the Creeds of the Church and other formularies of the Faith.'

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West Coast at least as far as the Firth of Clyde. The Gospel was possibly carried farther still by Romanized Britons. Tertullian (died c. 220) speaks of 'the haunts of the Britons inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ'.² The missions of St. Ninian,³ himself a Pict (A.D. 362-432), to the Picts of Galloway, and of Central and Eastern Scotland, and the mission of St. Patrick from Scotland to Ireland (A.D. 432-61)—concerning both of which we have definite information— took place while Britain was still regarded as a portion of the Empire.

1 The Duty of the Church according to her Lord's Commission, 'Doctrine', pp. 9-10 (Edinburgh, 1910). See Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, Appendix O, p. 120.
2 Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, Chap. vii.
3 See A. R. MacEwen, A History of the Church of Scotland, vol. I; J. A. Duke, The Columban Church, and J. H. S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (1960); also Fathers of the Kirk (ed. R. S. Wright, 1960).

Thus through the continuous Christianity of Strathclyde, the Church of Scotland claims to rank as a branch borne on the root of primitive Christianity, calling no other branch its Mother. The National Church of Scotland, as it now exists, and has existed since the twelfth century, is, however, the result of a coalescence of various elements, corresponding to those whose combination formed the medieval Scottish State. The mission of St. Ninian and his disciples, which apparently penetrated the whole level coast of Scotland, as far as and including Caithness— whatever may have been the defections of the fifth and early sixth centuries—undoubtedly paved the way for the more complete evangelization

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<p>which followed. In the early part of the sixth century a Christian Kingdom—the original Scot-land—was formed in Argyllshire by conquest and colonization from Ulster. This led indirectly to the conversion of the mountainous region of North Pictland, which was effected in the sixth century and onwards by a magnificent series of missions from Ireland. The typical representative of the Irish mission was St. Columba, a recompense to Scotland for her own gift of St. Patrick. In the course of the eighth century consolidation began by the union of the crowns of North and South Pictland; and in 844 Scots and Picts merged into one kingdom under Kenneth MacAlpine. The result in relation to the Church appears in the appointment of Tuathal, Abbot of Dunkeld, as Bishop of Fortrenn: that is to say, the successor of St. Columba and heir of his primacy in the Church of the Scots and their missions became Bishop of the Picts. In this we recognize the union of the Church of the Scots and Picts. The <i>name</i> 'Scottish Church'—<i>Ecclesia Scoticana</i>—first appears in the course of the following reign (Girig, 878-89), in connexion with the liberation of the Church from certain secular exactions. Under Malcolm Canmore (1057-93) the British principality of Strathclyde, whose primaeval Christianity had been revived and extended by St. Kentigern of Glasgow, the contemporary of St. Columba, came under the authority of the Scottish crown, to which it was definitely annexed in the reign of Malcolm's son, St. David. The territory of Bernicia (that is, the Lothians and Merse), upon which the Scots had maintained a hold since the battle of Carham (1018), was also definitely attached to Malcolm's crown. This, together with the rest of Northumbria, had been evangelized from Iona; but since 664 it had adhered to Roman in preference to Celtic usages. Finally, the absorption of a Scandinavian</p>	<p>centuries— undoubtedly paved the way for the more complete evangelisation which followed. In the early part of the sixth century a Christian Kingdom—the original Scot-land —was formed in Argyllshire by conquest and colonisation from Ulster. This led indirectly to the conversion of the mountainous region of North Pictland, which was' effected in the sixth century and onwards by a magnificent series of missions from Ireland. The typical representative of the Irish mission was St. Columba, a recompense to Scotland for her own gift of St. Patrick. In the course of the eighth century consolidation began by the union of the crowns of North and South Pictland; and in 844 Scots and Picts merged into one kingdom under Kenneth MacAlpine. The result in relation to the Church appears in the appointment of Tuathal, Abbot of Dunkeld, as Bishop of Fortrenn : that is to say, the successor of St. Columba and heir of his primacy in the Church of the Scots and their missions became Bishop of the Picts. In this we recognise the union of the Church of the Scots and Picts. The <i>name</i> ' Scottish Church'—<i>Ecclesia Scoticana</i> —first appears in the course of the following reign (Girig, 878-889), in connection with the liberation of the Church from certain secular exactions. Under Malcolm Canmore (1057-1093) the British principality of Strathclyde, whose primaeval Christianity had been revived and extended by St. Kentigern of Glasgow, the contemporary of St. Columba, came under the authority of the Scottish crown, to which it was definitely annexed in the reign of Malcolm's son, St. David. The territory of Bernicia (that is, the Lothians and Merse), upon which the Scots had maintained a hold since the battle of Carham (1018), was also definitely attached to Malcolm's crown. This, together with the rest of Northumbria, had been evangelised from Iona; but since 664 it had adhered to Roman in preference to Celtic usages. Finally, the absorption of a Scandinavian</p>
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<p>element in the extreme north of Scotland and the Western Islands, which ecclesiastically and politically were for long dependent on Norway, gave Scotland its present frontiers. But it was not until 1469 that the Orkney and Shetland Islands came under the Scottish crown as part of the dowry of Margaret of Denmark, bride of James III. Such were the constituent elements of the Scottish Church and State.</p> <p>The Celtic type of Church life, developed as it was during a period of separation from the main current of European history, was in many particulars widely different from that which was prevalent on the Continent of Europe. In the Columban Church <i>jurisdiction</i> was monastic, not episcopal. <i>Easter</i> was observed on a date fixed by a method which, during the time of isolation, had been elsewhere replaced by one more exact. There were other peculiarities, chiefly survivals of earlier usage, possibly in some details derived from Eastern Christianity. Since the Celtic Church regarded the Patriarchate of Rome as limited by the frontiers of the Empire, it was decidedly disinclined to acknowledge the Roman supremacy or to recognize any duty of conformity to the practice of Rome merely as such. In the matter of the date of Easter, which had aroused the first and sharpest controversy, the Celtic Church accepted the general Western usage by A.D. 716. In many other respects, however, it maintained its distinctive organization and discipline until a much later period. <i>Diocesan</i> Episcopacy, for example, was unknown in Celtic Scotland until the twelfth century; previously to that there was a single 'Bishop of the Scots'.¹ The marriage of Malcolm Canmore to the Saxon Princess Margaret initiated, however, a movement towards conformity with the territorial system elsewhere general. <i>Dioceses</i> were formed, and these were subdivided into parishes. Against the claims of</p>	<p>element in the extreme north of Scotland and the Western Islands, which ecclesiastically and politically were for long dependent on Norway, gave Scotland its present frontier. But it was not until 1469 that the Orkney and</p> <p>Shetland Islands came under the Scottish crown as part of the dowry of Margaret of Denmark, bride of James in. Such were the constituent elements of the Scottish Church and State.</p> <p>The Celtic type of Church life, developed as it was during a period of separation from the main current of European history, was in many particulars widely different from that which was prevalent on the Continent of Europe. In the Columban Church <i>jurisdiction</i> was monastic, not episcopal. <i>Easter</i> was observed on a date fixed by a method which, during the time of isolation, had been elsewhere replaced by one more exact. There were other peculiarities, chiefly survivals of earlier usage, possibly in some details derived from Eastern Christianity. Since the Celtic Church regarded the Patriarchate of Rome as limited by the frontiers of the Empire, it was decidedly disinclined to acknowledge the Roman supremacy or to recognise any duty of conformity to the practice of Rome merely as such. In the matter of the date of Easter, which had aroused the first and sharpest controversy, the Celtic Church accepted the general Western usage by 716 A.D. In many other respects, however, it maintained its distinctive organisation and discipline until a much later period. <i>Diocesan</i> Episcopacy, for example, was unknown in Celtic Scotland until the twelfth century; previously to that there was a single ' Bishop of the Scots.'¹ The marriage of Malcolm Canmore to the Saxon Princess Margaret initiated, however, a movement towards conformity with the territorial system elsewhere general. <i>Dioceses</i> were</p>
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Canterbury and York *Ecclesiastical autonomy* was secured in A.D. 1188. Although the price paid for securing independence of these English claims was acknowledgement of the more absolute supremacy of the Roman See, such supremacy has been allowed by the Church of Scotland for less than four out of the many

1 i.e. *with jurisdiction*.

centuries of its existence. For, in the middle of the sixteenth century the controversy with Rome was reopened, the Church of Scotland revised its relation to that see, and definitely rejected the papal obedience. It reasserted its responsibility as a national Church and its consequent right and duty to correct error and to reform abuse in its own practice. The Reformation which resulted has in no way affected identity, but on the contrary reaffirmed and strengthened the unity and continuity of the Church of Scotland with the One Church Apostolic and Catholic. The Reformation in Scotland was the obedient response of the Church to the call of God to put its house in order, to pare away the medieval growth of innovations and improvisations that obscured the face of the Catholic Church and caused it to deviate from its apostolic foundation in Christ. The Reformed Church of Scotland claimed, and still claims, to be none other than the one Church of God in Scotland, insisting on remaining ever identical with itself (*semper eadem*) in its apostolic origin and Catholic continuity by rebuttal of aberrations and deviations from the integrity of the Catholic and Apostolic faith of the Early Church. Against all attempts to alter the Church by changing its foundation in the Faith once delivered to the Saints, whether by unwarranted addition or by deforming subtractions, the Church in

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Scotland clung faithfully to its unity with the Church of the Apostolic and Catholic Fathers. The Reformation represented, therefore, in no sense a movement to found a new Church, or even to refound the Church, but the living obedience of the Church to its one Lord acting according to its own divinely-given Apostolic and Catholic norms and standards. As such it continues to be the Church Reformed relying upon the Promise of Christ that the gates of hell will not prevail against it and insisting on maintaining its integrity from generation to generation by continuous obedience and conformity to Jesus Christ the sole King and Head of the Church.

IV Ministry

There is one general Church visible held forth in the New Testament.¹ The visible Church, Catholic or Universal, is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the House and Family of God.² 'Unto this Catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints **in this life and to the end of the world**, and doth by His own presence and Spirit **according to his promise** make them effectual thereunto.'³ 'Christ hath **instituted** a government and governors

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ecclesiastical in **His Church**: to that purpose the Apostles did immediately receive the keys from the hand of Jesus Christ **and did use and exercise them in all the Churches of the world upon all occasions.**

And Christ hath since continually furnished some **in His Church** with gifts of government, and with commission to exercise the same,⁴ **when called thereunto.'**

Ordination is always to be continued in the Church. **It is the act of the Presbytery. The power of ordering is in the whole Presbytery,**

but the act may be fulfilled by the Presbytery or the ministers sent from them for ordination.⁵ The act of ordination is to be performed with all due care, wisdom, gravity and solemnity.⁶

'Every Minister of the Word is to be ordained by imposition of hands, and prayer, with fasting, by those preaching presbyters to whom it doth belong',⁷ 'who being set apart themselves for the work of the

1 Form of Church Govt., par. i .

2 Conf. of Faith, xxv. 2.

3 Ibid., xxv. 3; Form of Church Govt.: 'Of the Church': 'The ministry, oracles, and ordinances of the New Testament, are given by Jesus Christ to the general church visible for the gathering and perfecting of it in this life, until His second coming.'

4 Form of Church Govt., 'Of Church-Government'. See also The Second Helvetic Confession, xviii.

5 Form of Church Govt., 'Touching the Power of Ordination' and 'Rules'.

6 Ibid., 'The Directory for the Ordination of Ministers'.

7 Ibid., 'Touching the Doctrine of Ordination'. The office of preaching as a general part of the Pastor's duty had largely fallen into abeyance before the Reformation, and was for the most part left to the Friars. A good deal is explained by the determination of the

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Reformers to insist on capacity to preach as a necessary qualification either in Presbyter or Bishop. Priests who could not preach were limited to employment as Readers.

Ministry, have power to join in the setting apart of others'.¹ Records are carefully to be kept of the names of persons ordained, and of the presbyters who did impose hands upon them.² In this act of ordination the Church of Scotland, as part of the Holy Catholic or Universal Church worshipping one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, affirms anew its belief in the Gospel of the sovereign grace and love of God, wherein through Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, incarnate, crucified, and risen, He freely offers to all men, upon repentance and faith, the forgiveness of sins, renewal by the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, and calls them to labour in the fellowship of faith for the advancement of the kingdom of God throughout the world. The Church of Scotland acknowledges the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the supreme rule of faith and life. The Church of Scotland holds as its subordinate standard the Westminster Confession of Faith, recognizing liberty of opinion on such points of doctrine as do not enter into the substance of the Faith, and claiming the right, in dependence on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, to formulate, interpret, or modify its subordinate standards: always in agreement with the

² *Ibid.*, 1 Doctrinal Part of Ordination. The office of preaching as a general part of the Pastor's duty had largely fallen into abeyance before the Reformation, and was for the most part left to the Friars. A good deal is explained by the determination of the Reformers to insist on capacity to preach as a necessary qualification either in Presbyter or Bishop. Priests who could not preach were limited to employment as Readers.

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word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the said Confession, of which agreement the Church itself shall be sole judge.³

It belongs to the office of the minister to pray for and with his flock, as the mouth of the people unto God; to pray for the sick; to read the Scriptures publicly, to feed the flock by preaching the Word;⁴ to catechize; to dispense other divine mysteries; to administer the Sacraments; to bless the people from God;⁵ to take care of the poor; and to rule over the flock as a pastor.⁶ In

1 Form of Church Govt., 'Rules'.

2 Ibid.-

3 Ordinal and Service Book, 1962, p. 42; see Scottish Journal of Theology, 1958, vol. xi, 3, pp. 225-52.

4 'It appertains to the Pastor to pray for the people, and namely for the Flock committed to his charge, to blesse them in the name of the Lord, who will not suffer the Blessings of His faithfull servants to be frustrat.' Second Book of Discipline, IV. 8.

5 The Biblical justification for this ministry is given on the following ground: 'That the priests and levites in the Jewish Church were trusted with the public reading of the Word is proved (Deut. xxxi. 9 - 11; Neh. viii. 1-3, 13). That the ministers of the Gospel have as ample a charge and commission to dispense the Word, as well as other ordinances, as the priests and levites had under the Law, is proved Isa. lxvi. 21; Matt, xxiii. 34, where our Saviour entitleth the officers of the New Testament, whom He will send forth, by the same names as the teachers of the Old.' Form of Church Govt., 'Pastors'.

6 Ibid.

this last function (of ruling) are associated with the minister certain others, 'which officers reformed Churches commonly call

It belongs to the office of the minister to pray for and with his flock, as the mouth of the people unto God ; to pray for the sick; to read the Scriptures publicly ; to feed the flock by preaching the word; to catechize; to dispense other divine mysteries; to administer the Sacraments; to bless the people from God ; to take care of the poor ; and to rule.¹ In

3 Ibid., ' Rules.'

4 Form of Ch. Govt., ' Rules.'

1 Form of C.G., ' Pastors.'

this last function (of ruling) are

Elders'.¹ In terms like these the Church of Scotland states its doctrine of 'lawful Ministry' as one of the things necessary 'to make the face of a Christian Church'.² The first step taken by our Blessed Lord towards the constitution of the Church was the calling, ordaining, and commissioning of the Apostles. He said, 'As my Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you.'³ He said, 'He that receiveth you receiveth me.'⁴ He said, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'⁵ They were to be His 'chosen witnesses',⁶ **the princes of the New Israel having judicial authority over the whole church, wise master-builders,**⁷ foundations of the Church.⁸ **It was their ministry to mediate authoritatively the once-and-for-all Revelation in Christ which was deposited in the New Testament Scriptures and which was creative of the historical Church. As such the Apostles form the perpetually existing and unrepeatable foundation of the Church in all ages. Their Ministry, in direct appointment by Christ, was unique and cannot be transmitted, but by the ministry of the Word mediated to the Church through the Apostolic tradition of Revelation in the New Testament, their authoritative and judicial ministry continues to order and govern the life and mission of the Church. In the Apostles as forming the foundation of the Church all ministry was contained, and from them only existing ministry is derived as a ministry dependent on the Apostles and ordered by them.**⁹ The Apostles chose and ordained men to be ministers,¹⁰ not to succeed them in their unique Apostolic office, but to succeed to as much of their function as is transmissible,¹¹ namely a stewardship in the oracles and mysteries of God and a pastoral rule in the Church, with authority to ordain others in this continuing

1 Form of Church Govt., 'Other Church

associated with the minister certain others, 'which officers reformed Churches commonly call Elders.'² In terms like these the Church of Scotland states its doctrine of 'lawful Ministry' as one of the things necessary 'to make the face of a Christian Church.'³ The first step taken by our Blessed Lord towards the constitution of the Church was the calling, ordaining, and commissioning of the Apostles. He said, 'As my Father hath sent Me into the World, even so send I you.'⁴ He said, 'He that receiveth you receiveth Me.'¹ He said, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'² They were to be His 'chosen witnesses,'³

foundations of the Church.⁴ **In them at the first all Ministry was contained ; and from them existing Ministry is derived.**⁵ **They chose and ordained men to be ministers,**⁶ **succeeding to as much of their function as is transmissible,**⁷ **and these in turn ordained others to succeed themselves: and so continuously until now.**⁸

<p>Governors'.</p> <p>2 Compare <i>Scots Confession</i>, 1560, xvjii; cf. xxii. The others noted are: The Word truly preached; the Sacraments duly administered; and a godly discipline.</p> <p>3 John xx. 21.</p> <p>4 Matt. x. 40; John xiii. 20.</p> <p>5 Matt, xviii. 18.</p> <p>6 Acts i. 8, x. 41, &c.</p> <p>7 1 Cor. iii. 10.</p> <p>8 Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14.</p> <p>9 See J. B. Lightfoot, <i>Philippians</i>, 'Dissertation', p. 187; cf. J. Armitage Robinson, <i>Early History of Church and Ministry</i>, p. 81; J. K. S. Reid, <i>The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry</i>; A. Ehrhardt, <i>The Apostolic Ministry</i>.</p> <p>10 Acts xiv. 23; 2 Tim. i. 6, ii. 2 ; Titus i. 5.</p> <p>11 See G. Hill, <i>Lectures on Divinity</i>, VI. ii. 2.</p> <p>ministry dependent on the Apostles. Accordingly the Apostles ordained these ministers not as they themselves were ordained, and therefore not as successors in their place, but by the laying on of hands with prayer as a subordinate and dependent ministry; and they in their turn exercised their ministry not with the judicial and oracular authority of the Apostles but only in subordination and obedience to the Apostolic Ministry and in conformity with the Apostolic teaching and ordinances. This is the ordained ministry that has continued throughout the Church until now, and may justly be called an 'Apostolic Ministry'.¹ By their ordering of the Church in its foundation in Christ the Apostles provided the historical Church with an institutional ministry within the authority and sphere of their own Apostolic commission from the historical and risen Jesus Christ. But throughout the life and mission of the Church in all ages the holy ministry derives directly from the ascended Lord who continues to send down gifts for the</p>	<p>2 <i>ibid.</i>, 'Other Church Governors.'</p> <p>3 Compare <i>Scots Conf.</i>, 1560, xviii., cf. xxii. The others noted are: The word truly preached; the Sacraments duly administered; and a godly discipline (as to which last, see <i>Book of Common Prayer</i>, Preface to Communion Service).</p> <p>4 St. John xx. 21.</p> <p>1 St. Matt. x. 40; St. John xiii. 20.</p> <p>2 St. Matt, xviii. 18.</p> <p>3 Acts i. 8, x. 41, etc.</p> <p>4 Eph. ii. 20 ; Rev. xxi. 14.</p> <p>5 See Lightfoot, <i>Philippians</i>, 'Dissertation,' p. 187; cf. Armitage Robinson, <i>Early History of Church and Ministry</i>. p. 81.</p> <p>6 Acts xiv. 23 ; 2 Tim. i. 6, ii. 2 ; Tit. i. 5.</p> <p>7 See Hill, <i>Lectures</i>, vi. ii. 2.</p>
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ministry upon His Church, so that whenever a man is called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament He is called and sent by Christ Himself and endowed with gifts for his office by the Spirit. But these gifts are exercised within the sphere of the Apostolic mission and commission and in conformity with the Apostolic ordering of the institutional ministry. The laying on of hands appointed by the Apostles to be used in ordaining men to the holy ministry attests that this ministry derives both *mediately* from the historical and risen Jesus through the Apostles and *immediately* from the ascended King and Head of the Church through the Holy Spirit. It is this twofold derivation from the One Lord that is the ground and justification of the Church's ministry from generation to generation.²

Ministry is thus not an ecclesiastical expedient; it is a *Divine Ordinance*. 'God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.'³ 'HE [Christ ascended] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.'⁴ The Apostolic Ministry is a *perpetual* ordinance. It is 'till we

1 Titus i. 5; 2 Tim. ii. 2; i Clement, 42, 44. See T. F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, pp. 35ff., 66ff., *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. i, pp. 231?, 2i4ff.

2 *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1958, vol. xi, 3, pp. 242ff.; *Church Quarterly Review*, 1959, vol. clx, 334, *The Doctrine of Order*, pp. 21-36.

3 1 Cor. xii. 28.

4 Eph. iv. 11. ,

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8 Tit. i. 5 ; 2 Tim. ii. 2 ; 1 Clem. **Rom.** 42, 44.

Christ'.¹ Christ said to the Apostles, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'²—a promise which could be fulfilled not to themselves personally, but only by His presence with those who in the world should continue to represent them. It is further an *essential* ordinance, requisite to the being of the **Christian** Church. In the persons of the Apostles the Ministry historically preceded the Society, and was itself the germ and nucleus of the Church. 'The Apostles whom He had chosen' were the recipients of Christ's commandments for the Church:³ in their keeping He instituted the Sacraments;⁴ to them He committed discipline,⁵ pastorate,⁶ responsibility, and the authority which is the correlative of responsibility.⁷ In the language of the Confession,⁸ the Ministry is given 'for the gathering' as well as 'for the perfecting' of the Saints. That is to say (in the classical phraseology of our divines) it is 'the first depositary' of the keys of the Kingdom. In planting the Church where it has not yet existed, the presence of the Ministry is by itself sufficient: it carries with it, not only the Word to convert, but also Baptism to engraft, the Eucharist to nourish, government to set in order, discipline to guard, and the apostolic succession to provide a future Ministry. The Ministry is *representative*. They who stand in it are *Christ's* Ministers,⁹ and their ministerial acts are done in His Name,¹⁰ being acts which are proper to Christ only, as Apostle of God, and Mediator of the New Covenant and High Priest over the House of God.**11** Insomuch as Christ's Mediation is twofold, being for God to man, and also for man to God, ministry in Christ's Name

[1 Eph. iv. 13.](#)
[2 Matt, xxviii. 20.](#)
[3 Acts i. 2.](#)
[4 Matt, xxviii. 19, xxvi. 20ff.](#)
[5 John xxi. 15, 16.](#)

[1 1 Cor. xii. 28.](#)

[2 Eph. iv. 11.](#)

all come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'³ Christ said to the Apostles, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'⁴—a promise which could be fulfilled not to themselves personally, but only by His presence with those who in the world should continue to represent them. It is further an *essential* ordinance, requisite to the being of the Church. In the persons of the Apostles the Ministry historically preceded the Society, and was itself the germ and nucleus of the Church. 'The Apostles whom He had chosen' were the recipients of Christ's commandments for the Church:⁵ in their keeping He instituted the Sacraments;¹ to them He committed discipline,² pastorate,³ responsibility and the authority which is the correlative of responsibility.⁴ In the language of the Confession,⁵ the Ministry is given 'for the gathering' as well as 'for the perfecting' of the Saints. That is to say (in the classical phraseology of our divines) it is 'the first depositary' of the keys of the Kingdom. In planting the Church where it has not yet existed, the presence of the Ministry is by itself sufficient: it carries with it, not only the Word to convert, but also Baptism to engraft, the Eucharist to nourish, government to set in order, discipline to guard, and the apostolic succession to provide a future Ministry. The Ministry is *representative*. They who stand in it are *Christ's* Ministers,⁶ and their ministerial acts are done in His Name,¹ being acts which are proper to Christ only, as Apostle of God, and Mediator of the New Covenant and High Priest over the House of God. Insomuch as Christ's Mediation is twofold, being for God to man, and also for man to God, ministry in Christ's Name

6 Matt. xxiv. 45-51; Luke xii. 42-48.

7 Luke x. 16; Heb. xiii. 7.

8 *Conf. of Faith*, xxv. 3.

9 *Ibid.*, xxix. 3; 1 Cor. iv. 1.

10 'To meet in Christ's Name' or 'to act in Christ's Name' (Matt. xviii. 19) is to meet or to act with Christ's authority in the order which He has appointed. Else Christ's Name is taken in vain. 'No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God as Aaron was.' For the manner of Aaron's calling, see Exod. xxviii-xxix.

11 The Ministry does not represent the people before the Face of God. The Minister is not appointed by the people, nor is he their delegate, and is not therefore responsible to the people. He is sent by Christ and acts in Christ's Name, representing Him; and only because Christ—and He alone—represents the people vicariously before God does the minister represent the people *in Christ*. He is the servant of the Lord, not of the congregation, but *for Jesus' sake* he is their servant also; cf. *Royal Priesthood*, pp. 40f.

appears sometimes as ministry on behalf of the flock before God (as for example, in presentation of prayers and offerings, or in the earlier stage of the Eucharist),¹ and sometimes as ministry on behalf of God to the flock (as, for example, in preaching,² baptism, benediction, or in the later stage of the Eucharist).³ Nevertheless, in all its ministrations alike the Ministry is Christ's, not the people's.⁴ If sometimes it presents itself as representative of the people, that is because the action then in hand is one which belongs to Christ's mediation for His flock; and if sometimes it seems to act as representative of Christ to men, that is because the action is then one which belongs to His mediation for God. It belongs to Christ's office as High Priest, and to Him alone, to stand **in** for us before God⁵ and plead His own Sacrifice,⁶ to make intercession,⁷ to present our prayers,⁸ to offer our alms

3 Eph. iv. 13.

4 St. Matt, xxviii. 20.

6 Acts i. 2.

1 St. Matt, xxviii. 19, xxvi. 20 *seq.*

2 St. John xxi. 15, 16.

3 St. Matt. xxiv. 45-51; St. Luke xii. 42-48.

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and gifts.⁹ It belongs equally to Him alone to give forth the Gospel,¹⁰ to wash from sin,¹¹ to feed with His Body and Blood,¹² to absolve from offence;¹³ and to bless His people with peace.¹⁴ What therefore the Ministry does in this respect it does representatively, fulfilling a service rather than exercising a power. As the Baptist, when he was asked, 'What sayest thou of thyself?' replied, 'I am a voice,'¹⁵ or as St. Peter repudiated as his act the healing of the impotent man and referred it to the agency of the ascended Lord,¹⁶ for **whom** he was no more than a hand, so must the Ministry account of itself. It is, in one aspect, Christ's instrument to the Church. But the Church is itself a ministry and priesthood to the world; and in that aspect finds the official Ministry an organ bestowed upon it by Christ for the efficient exercise of that function. In either case Christ stands behind the Ministry, and the acts done in His Name receive effect from Him, who is the only Minister of the Grace of God, **for in the Church's ministry He Himself is directly present in Spirit and Power.**

1 Acts xiii. 2; *Conf. of Faith*, xxix. 2, 'a spiritual oblation'.

2 2 Cor. v. 20.

3 See pp. 42f.

4 The Church of Scotland does not hold the view that Ministry is representative merely of the universal Christian priesthood, as seems to be held by R. C. Moberly (*Ministerial Priesthood*, pp. 257-8), a view inconsistent with, for example, such functions as Benediction or the Preaching of His Word who now speaketh from Heaven. See *Practical Use of Saving Knowledge, Warrants to Believe*, ii. 5-8, *The Sum of Saving Knowledge, The Confessions of the Church of Scotland, etc.* (1725), pp. 4i6f.

5 Heb. ix. 24.

6 Heb. ix. 24; Rev. v. 6; *Larger Catechism*, 55.

7 Rom. viii. 34.

8 Heb. iv. 14-16.

9 Heb. xiii. 15.

that is because the action is then one which belongs to His mediation for God. It belongs to Christ's office as High Priest, and to Him alone, to stand for us before God² and plead His own Sacrifice,³ to make intercession,⁴ to present our prayers,⁵ to offer our alms and gifts.⁶ It belongs equally to Him alone to give forth the Gospel,⁷ to wash from sin,⁸ to feed with His Body and Blood,⁹ to absolve from offence; ¹ and to bless His people with peace.² What therefore the Ministry does in this respect it does *representatively*, fulfilling a service rather than exercising a power. As the Baptist, when he was asked, 'What sayest thou of thyself?' replied, 'I am a voice,' ³ or as St. Peter repudiated as his act the healing of the impotent man and referred it to the agency of the ascended Lord,⁴ for Whom he was no more than a hand, so must the Ministry account of itself. It is, in one aspect, Christ's instrument to the Church. But the Church is itself a ministry and priesthood to the world; and in that aspect finds the official Ministry an organ bestowed upon it by Christ for the efficient exercise of that function. In either case Christ stands behind the Ministry, and the acts done in His Name receive effect from Him, Who is the only Minister of the Grace of God.

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1 0 Heb. xii. 25.

11 1 John i. 7.

12 John vi. 51-57.

13 Acts v. 31.

14 John xiv. 27.

15 John i. 23.

16 Acts iii. 12-16.

This teaching has nowhere been better expressed than in some of the prayers of Calvin. 'Almighty God . . . Thou hast been

pleased in thine infinite mercy not only to choose from among us some to be priests unto Thee, but also to consecrate us all to Thyself in Thine Only-begotten Son. . . ,
1 'Grant, Almighty God, that since Thou hast deigned to take us as a priesthood to Thyself, and hast chosen us when we were not only of the lowest condition, but even profane and alien to all holiness, and hast consecrated us to Thyself by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may offer ourselves as holy victims to Thee,—O grant, that we may bear in mind our office and our calling, and sincerely devote ourselves to Thy service, and so present to Thee our efforts and our labours, that Thy Name may be truly glorified in us, and that it may really appear that we have been ingrafted into the Body of Thine Only-begotten Son; and as He is the Chief and the only true and perpetual Priest, may we become partakers of that priesthood with which Thou hast been pleased to honour Him, so that He may take us as associates to Himself; and may thus Thy Name be perpetually glorified by the Whole Body as well as by the Head.
Amen.'²

The Ministry is thus a *Stewardship*: and its requisite is fidelity.³ To it is committed the **W**ord of **R**econciliation,⁴ and the trust of the mysteries of God,⁵ and the pastorship of His flock.⁶ For these things it stands in charge, and must give account.⁷ This special responsibility of 'stewardship' cannot be shared or transferred, although no doubt there is also in the Church, in relation alike to service and the faith, a diffused

2 Heb. ix. 24.

3 Heb. ix. 24 ; Rev. v, 6; *Larger Catm.*, 55.

4 Rom. viii. 34.

5 Heb. iv. 14-16.

6 Heb. xiii. 15.

7 Heb. xii. 25.

8 1 St. John i. 7.

9 St. John vi. 51-57.

1 Acts v. 31.

2 St. John xiv. 27.

3 St. John i. 23.

4 Acts iii. 12-16.

The Ministry is thus a *Stewardship* : and its requisite is fidelity.¹ To it is committed the word of reconciliation,²

responsibility of the highest importance. But while the flock must answer for its recognition of Christ's Voice,⁸ and for its fidelity of submission to His Ordinances,⁹ and for its part in the preservation of the faith, it may not appropriate and cannot carry the special responsibility committed to the Ministry. Each must answer in the measure of his own trust. Christ's stewards on the other hand may be subject to frequent and urgent temptation from the self-willed demands of the souls committed to their pastorate. But no pressure or demand can relieve Christ's stewards from their trust, and no desire to conciliate can excuse them if they show

1 Comm. 011 Mai. i. 10.

2 Ibid., ii. 9; cf. also on Mai. ii. 5, iii- 7, 8.

3 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2; Titus i. 7; 1 Pet. iv. 10.

4 2 Cor. v. 19.

5 1 Cor. iv. 1.

6 Acts xx. 28.

7 Luke xii. 42-48, xvi. 2; Heb. xiii. 17.

8 John x. 4, 5.

9 Heb. xiii. 17.

themselves tolerant of pressure or plastic to the spirit of worldliness or unbelief or of impatience in the Church.¹ Men require of a steward that he be found faithful. The Ministry stands or falls, not to the flock, but to its Chief Shepherd. The ministers of Christ must hold the faith of the Gospel as it was delivered to them. They must assert the Christian standard of morality in face of the world's restlessness under Christ's prohibitions. They must keep the Sacraments intact as instituted. They are the guardians of doctrine,² of marriage, of the family, of the Church's discipline. And they must fulfil the Ministry which they have received, not counting life dear unto them.³

ORDERS OF MINISTRY

The Standards of the Church of Scotland

and the trust of the mysteries of God,³ and the pastorship of His flock.⁴ For these things it stands in charge, and must give account.⁵ This special responsibility of 'stewardship' cannot be shared or transferred, although no doubt there is also in the Church, in relation alike to service and the faith, a diffused responsibility of the highest importance. But while the flock must answer for its recognition of Christ's voice,⁶ and for its fidelity of submission to His Ordinances,⁷ and for its part in the preservation of the faith, it may not appropriate and cannot carry the special responsibility committed to the Ministry. Each must answer in the measure of his own trust. Christ's stewards on the other hand may be subject to frequent and urgent temptation from the self-willed demands of the souls committed to their pastorate. But no pressure or demand can relieve Christ's stewards from their trust, and no desire to conciliate can excuse them if they show

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<p>find in the New Testament mention of two types of Ministry, and distinguish them as ordinary and extraordinary.⁴ Among the <i>extraordinary</i> are reckoned Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets; and these are said to have ceased.⁵</p> <p>1 Neither are they excused if they have allowed themselves to be made incapable under constitutional forms of discharging their trust effectively. They have always the remedy of which the prophet reminds them (Mai. i. 10, R.V.).</p> <p>2 The distinctive, although not (p. 78) the only, guardians. In the Church of Scotland some Presbyters are set apart as <i>Teachers or Doctors</i>, who have as part of their office not only to teach sacred doctrine but to guard its purity in the Church (<i>Presbyterial Form of Church Govt.</i>: 'Teacher or Doctor'). Judicial authority in the guardianship of doctrine is held and exercised only by Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly.</p> <p>3 Acts xx. 24.</p> <p>4 <i>Form of Church Govt.</i>: 'Of the Officers of the Church.' The same distinction can be made by Roman theology; cf. M. Schmaus, <i>Katholische Dogmatik</i>, IV. i. p. 573.</p> <p>5 The commonplace of our divines on this subject has been that in a settled or reformed Church which possesses the regular ministry the extraordinary has no place and cannot be looked for. They, however, always recognized that God might raise up extraordinary ministry of this kind as the situation might require it. Thus Calvin wrote to the King of Poland in 1554: 'Because, by the tyranny of the Pope, the continuous line of ordination has been broken, a new expedient for the restoration is required . . . But God Himself brings the remedy in raising up fitting and upright teachers to build up the Church, now lying deformed among the ruins of popery. And this office which the Lord laid upon us, when</p>	<p>of the family, of the Church's discipline. And they must fulfil the Ministry which they have received, not counting life dear unto them.¹</p> <p>ORDERS OF MINISTRY</p> <p>The Standards of the Church of Scotland find in the New Testament mention of two types of Ministry, and distinguish them as ordinary and extraordinary.² Among the extraordinary are reckoned Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets; and these are said to have ceased.³</p> <p>1 Neither are they excused if they have allowed themselves to be made incapable under constitutional forms of discharging their trust effectively. They have always the remedy of which the prophet reminds them. (Mai. i. 10, R.V.)</p> <p>2 The distinctive, although not (p. 149) the only, guardians.</p> <p>1 Acts xx. 24, 2 <i>Form of Church Govt.</i>, 'Of the Officers of the Church.'</p> <p>3 The commonplace of our divines on this subject has been that in a settled or reformed Church which possesses the regular ministry the extraordinary has no place and cannot be looked for. They, however, always <u>kept room in theory for its possible emergence in case of necessity</u>. Patrick Forbes, for example, <u>thinks that the Reformation might have furnished such occasion; but adds that the necessity did not arise, regular ministry being available</u>. See his <i>Defence of the Lawful</i></p>
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He made use of our services in collecting Churches, is one that is altogether anomalous.' It was on this ground that Richard Hooker acknowledged the ministry which was raised up during the course of the Reformation, apart from the *ordinary* succession. 'Men may be extraordinarily, yet allowably, two ways admitted into spiritual functions in the Church. One is when God Himself doth of Himself raise up any whose labour He useth without requiring that men should authorise them. Another extraordinary kind of vocation is, when the exigence of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the Church, which otherwise we could willingly keep: where the Church must needs have some ordaine.d, neither hath, nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given often times, and may give, place. And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued successions of bishops in any effectual ordination' (O/ *the Laws of Eccl. Polity*, VII. xiv. i i) . See also Patrick Forbes, *Defence of the Lawful calling of the Ministry of Reformed Churches*; and Mason, *The Church of England and Episcopacy*, pp. 153, 185, 265, 268f. Precisely the same doctrine was applied by George Gillespie in insisting on the necessity of regular ordinations, *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions*, 1649, pp. 63f.

The ordinary Ministry is that which was constituted by the Apostles, and planted in the Churches which they founded. In the Church of Scotland, as in Reformed Churches generally, *the ordinary Ministry* was of two kinds,
(i) Presbyters or Bishops who laboured in the Word, dispensing the ordinances, and
(2) Elders or Deacons who assisted the Ministry of Word and Sacrament 'in

Calling of the Ministry of Reformed Churches.

The ordinary Ministry is that which was constituted by the Apostles, and planted

seeking the fruit of the same in the people'.¹ (1) Both 'Presbyter' and 'Bishop' are names applying to the same order, the essential ministry of Word and Sacrament, but a difference of application clung to the two names from the start. 'Presbyter' was the name given to ministers in Jewish-Christian Churches, and is found in the Churches established by Paul in his first missionary journey in accordance with the Jerusalem tradition.² 'Bishop' or 'Episcopos', however, is the name given to these ministers in Gentile churches, and is found accordingly in the churches established by Paul in his subsequent missionary journeys. The Pastoral letters appear to represent a stage where these two traditions are being brought together.³ On the other hand, the term 'Presbyter' came to denote status rather than function, and was used as the general title of the office; whereas 'Bishop' was predicative or descriptive of function rather than rank or technical office.⁴ (2) Both 'Elder' and 'Deacon' are names applying to the same kind of ministry, i.e. an assistant or diaconal ministry.⁵ A corresponding difference obtained between these to

1 Second Book of Discipline, viii; A. Henderson, The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland, v, vi.

2 See A. Ehrhardt, The Apostolic Ministry, p. 12; T. M. Lindsay, Church and Ministry, p. 118.

3 The account given in Acts xx which uses both 'Presbyters' and 'Bishops' of the Church at Ephesus is one of the 'We' passages in the Acts. 'Presbyter' is the word used by the narrator, but 'Bishop' by St. Paul; cf. Phil. i. 1, where Paul mentions only 'Bishops' and 'Deacons' in Philippi.

4 See Donald Macleod, Ministry and Sacraments of the Church of Scotland, pp. 96-8; J. Armitage Robinson, Early History of Church and Ministry, pp. 83,84; and G. W. H. Lampe, Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry, p.

in the Churches which they founded. It was of two orders:—

- (1) the Presbyter or Bishop,
- (2) the Deacon.

Of the two names, Presbyter and Bishop, both of which are applied to the first of these orders.

'Presbyter' was apparently rather the official and general title of the office, and

Bishop ' (episcopus, overseer) was at first more or less predicative or descriptive of its function.¹

17.

5 cf. *The Collections* of W. Steuart of Pardovan, VI. 2: 'Though the office of Deacon is included in the office of a Ruling Elder, yet it is fit that some be appointed Deacons, distinct from that of the Elder.'

that which obtained between 'Presbyter' and 'Bishop'. Thus 'Elder' or 'Presbyter' was associated with the 'Presbyter' who laboured in the Word, whereas 'Deacon' was associated with the 'Bishop'. The relation between 'Elder' and 'Deacon' is seen in the appointment of 'the Seven' in the Acts after the analogy of 'the Seven [Elders] of a city' in Jewish Communities, but this function is described in Greek as deaconing.¹ The Reformed Church has always recognized, therefore, two kinds of 'Presbyters'

in the early church, 'Teaching Elders' and 'Ruling Elders' as they are called in modern times.² As distinct from 'Elders' Deacons were the assistants of Bishops or Presbyters in their duties generally and especially in care of the poor and necessitous. It appears probable that in the first age local churches were normally ruled by a college or council of 'Presbyter-Bishops', who exercised a joint authority, acting corporately in matters of common interest (as of government and discipline), and allocating among themselves other duties of ministration:³ and that behind and with them stood the Apostolic Ministry, representing the general authority in the churches, and its delegations representing the link between the local Presbyteries and the Apostolate (Timothy, Titus, &c.) There is no doubt that a presidency existed within these local councils of Presbyters, as there existed in the Presbytery of Jerusalem which was permanently presided over by James.⁴ In the pre-Christian and in contemporary communities outside the Church there were signal examples of such presidency. The *Gerousia* or community council had its *Gerousiarches*; the local Presbytery or

1 See Dr. D. Maeleod, *Ministry and Sacraments of the Church of Scotland*, 96-98; and see especially Dr. Armitage Robinson, *Early History of Church and Ministry*, pp. 83, 84.

Deacons were the assistants of Presbyters in their duties generally, and especially in care of the poor and necessitous. It appears probable that in the first age local churches were normally ruled by a college or council of 'Presbyter-Bishops,' who exercised a joint authority, acting corporately in matters of common interest (as of government and discipline), and allocating among themselves other duties of ministration :² and that behind and with them stood the Apostolic Ministry and its delegations, representing a general authority of the Church.

It may be presumed on general grounds

eldership in the synagogue had its
Archisynagogos

1 Acts vi. According to the Mishnah (*Sanhedrin*, i. 6), a community of 120 men was entitled to elect its local *sanhedrin* of seven elders, cf. Acts i. 15. See D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 237f.; T. M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry*, p. 115.
2 See Calvin, *Inst.*, IV. iv. 2, IV. xi. 1, 6. Calvin cites the comment of Ambrose *In 1 Tim.*, v: 'The ancient synagogue, and afterwards the Church, had elders, without whose advice nothing was done: this has grown obsolete, by whose fault I know not, unless it be by the sloth, or rather the pride, of teachers, who would have it seen that they are somewhat.' What actually happened was that 'Deacon' absorbed into it the second kind of 'Presbyter' or 'Elder'. Only at the Reformation was 'Elder' revived.
3 T. M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 154; G. Dix, in *The Apostolic Ministry* (ed. K. E. Kirk), p. 293; Gore, *Church and Ministry*, pp. 220-1, 224; Rom. xii. 8; 1 Thess. v. 12; Heb. xiii. 7.
4 This *Presbytery* is distinct from the *Apostolate* at any rate after the stage described in Acts xii. 17. See the *Presbyterial Form of Church Government*, 'Of Classical Assemblies': 'The Church of Jerusalem consisted of many particular congregations under one presbyterial government.'

or ruler of the synagogue,¹ the Covenant communities of Qumran and Damascus had their *Paqid* or overseer, the Hebrew equivalent for the Greek *Episcopos* or Bishop.² It is very probable that the last named had a decisive influence in the development of the Christian Church. Where the Churches were called Synagogues, the president or presidents

that some presidency should have existed within these councils of Presbyters ; it is possible that there is allusion to such presidency in terms which occur in the New Testament :¹ but we have no information on which to base any conclusion on the subject.

2 Gore, *Church and Ministry*, pp. 220-221, 224 ; Rom. xii. 8 ; 1 Thes. v. 12 ; Heb. xiii. 7.

¹ These, however, may be, and in the passage last cited probably are, only descriptive synonyms for the 'Presbyter-Bishop.'

of the local council of elders could be called the 'Ruler of the Synagogue',³ but not when the rift with Judaism grew wider and the churches were called *Ecclesiai*; some other description had to be found. Here it would be natural to turn to the official names in the Gentile Churches, and here the Hebrew *Paqid* = *Episcopos* would facilitate the general adoption of *Episcopos* in place of *Archisynagogos* to describe the presiding Presbyter, but the term 'Presbyter' remained as it also had a usage in the Gentile world. Whatever be the actual name used at the time it is clear from the writings of the New Testament that the Church had its leaders and presidents to preside over the public worship and over the pastoral care of the congregations and communities—the *poimenes*, *hegoumenoi*, and the *proestameno*i—especially to preside over the celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁴ It would be difficult to conclude that these pastoral or liturgical leaders were different from those who presided over the councils of Presbyters, namely the Presbyter-Bishops. There is still another important factor to be taken into account in determining the form for the ministry in the period covered by the New Testament writings—namely, the ministry of men like Timothy and Titus who certainly did not preside over single congregations or over several in one city like James at Jerusalem, but who were rather like missionary-bishops founding local churches and presbyteries over a wide area, in the case of Timothy in Asia Minor based on Ephesus, and in the case of Titus in Crete. On the other hand, it is precisely here in the Pastoral letters that

¹ T. M. Lindsay, op. cit., p. 130.

² *Manual of Discipline*, VI. 14. An equivalent term used is *mebaqqer*, VI. 12; *Zadokite Fragments*, X. 10; cf. the

comments of Brownlee, Charles, Jeremias and Rabin, *ad loc. cit.* In the LXX *episcopos*, *episcopo*, *episceptin*, *episcopin*, *See*. are used to translate words from the roots *pqd* and *bqr* ; cf. Acts i. 19 and Ps. lxxix. 25.

3 This continued to be the practice in some Jewish Christian Churches for many generations; Epiphanius, *Haer.* XXX. 18: See Jas. ii. 2. Sometimes a synagogue had more than one *Archisynagogos*, Mark v. 22; Acts xiii. 1 s ; and it is not unlikely that the council of elders in some Christian Churches had more than one president.

4 See T . M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 150f., 160f.

we see the place of the Presbyters (both kinds) in the ministry¹ and see that ordination is regarded both as 'the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery'² and as imparting a spiritual gift for the ministry.³

The New Testament does not provide us with a picture of a fixed or a final pattern of the ministry, for it describes the initial period of growth and living formation; but on the other hand it points to the coalescing of what in later terms can be described as both presbyterial and episcopal elements. Immediately after New Testament times the picture becomes clearer; and although there is still variety and change, a basic pattern emerges of Presbyter-Bishops presiding over councils of Presbyters and Deacons. One thing does appear, as T. M. Lindsay described it:⁴ We can say negatively that the change from one to the other did not come by any sudden alteration which gave rise to contentions; there is no word of such contentions in the whole round of Christian literature:⁵ the change came naturally, so naturally as to make it seem that there was no change. We can say positively that there is great likelihood that the channel of the change was the relation of the officials to the conduct of the public worship, and more especially

in their relation to the Eucharist. What happened there while a college of 'Presbyter- Bishops' was at the head of a congregation we do not know; but it is manifest that there could not be a collegiate superintendence of the Lord's Supper. Did the 'Presbyter-Bishops' take it in turn to officiate, or was one of their number appointed to undertake this service usually?

We do not know. But it did become the duty of one man to superintend the administration of the Eucharist; we see this in Justin Martyr; and the man whom Justin calls the *ἑπὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας* is plainly the forerunner of the single *episcopos*.

From a very early date there are significant indications in the Eastern Churches (Palestine, Syria, Proconsular Asia) of the practice of assigning to one person a definite and permanent precedence, with oversight of both ministry and flock; and to him

1 1 Tim. v. 17f.; Titus i. 5.

2 1 Tim. iv. 14.

3 Ibid.

4 *The Church and Ministry*, pp. 376f.

5 This is too sweeping a statement. St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians implies some contention, for he urges them to unite in the outward ordering of their Christian life in agreement with the Mind of Christ. Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians* also indicates contention over the ministry which recalls the same language used by Paul to the Corinthians against 'strife', 'jealousy', &c.

6 *Proestds*—the term used to describe the presbyter who laboured in the word in 1 Tim. v. 17.

the alternative title Bishop (that is, overseer) came in such cases to be limited.

The development took place in churches

From a very early date, however, there are indications in the Eastern Churches (Palestine, Syria, Proconsular Asia) of the practice of assigning to one person a definite and permanent precedence, with oversight of both ministry and flock; and to him

founded by St. Paul himself within forty years after his martyrdom, in the areas that had seen the labours of Timothy and experienced the direct influence of St. John; and this fact has suggested that it had his sanction or even was due to his initiation. Ignatius, St. John's junior contemporary (martyred c. A.D. 107), was such a Bishop of the Church in Antioch; and in those of his letters which were written (immediately before his death) to Churches in Asia Minor, he makes it evident that similar officials existed in them as well. The vigour of his appeals for recognition of their authority suggests, however, that even in these Churches their office was recent and required commendation.¹ In the account of the ministry these epistles provide, it is the presbytery (or *sanhedrin*) that corresponds to the Apostles, while the Bishop presiding at the Eucharist represents Christ, but so do the deacons, for their ministry reflects the humble 'deaconing' of Christ the Servant of the Lord.² It is from the same area that there derives the early material embedded in the Clementine literature which describes the Bishop with his twelve Presbyters and four or more deacons,³ and from the same area that have come most of the early service books such as the *Didache*, *Didascalia*, *Testamentum Domini*, &c., all of which show the same general development.

In the West, on the other hand, and in Egypt, the Presbyteral Colleges continued for much longer to exercise the full oversight and to discharge the entire office of the Ministry.⁴ It is not too

¹ It is increasingly recognized that Ignatius wrote as he did, not in the interest of monepiscopacy, but in the interest of unity and order. The same motives are apparent in St. Paul's Epistle to the

the alternative title Bishop (that is, overseer) came in such cases to be limited. The exceptional position of St. James the Just at Jerusalem may have furnished suggestion and precedent for this development.

The development took place in the regions which correspond with the area of

St. John's direct influence :

and this fact has suggested that it had his sanction or even was due to his initiation. Ignatius, St. John's junior contemporary (martyred c. A.D. 110), was such a Bishop of the Church in Antioch ; and in those of his letters which were written (immediately before his death) to Churches in Asia Minor, he makes it evident that similar officials existed in them as well. The vigour of his appeals for recognition of their authority suggests, however, that even in these Churches their office was recent and required commendation.¹

Philippians and in Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians*.
 2 *Ad. Eph.*, 2. 2; 4. 1; *Ad Magn.*, 3. 1; 6. 1; 7. 1; *Ad Trail.*, 2. 1-3; 3. 1; 7. 2; *Ad Phil.*, Int.; 4. 1; 5. 1; 7. 1; 8. 1; 10. 2; *Ad Smyrn.*, 8. 1, 2; 9. 1; 10. i; i 2. 2; *Ad Polv.* 6. 1.
 3 *Clem. Recog.*, III. 66; VI. 15; *Horn.*, XI. 36.
 4 cf. the conclusions of E. W. Kemp after examining the evidence for the Presbyteral consecration of Bishops at Alexandria up to the Council of Nicaea: 'It appears that such evidence as we have that the mode of appointment of the early bishops of Alexandria was unusual is also evidence that there was a carefully regulated succession, albeit a succession through a presbyteral college . . . It is more than doubtful whether the Alexandrian use offers any guidance to the church in the reunion problems of the present day except perhaps in emphasizing that the principle of apostolic succession is compatible with a Presbyterian constitution.' (*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1955, vol. vi, p. 142.)

much to say that in the subapostolic age we can prove the nonexistence of the monarchical Episcopate in the great Apostolic Churches of Corinth and Rome, and in the equally great and famous Church of Alexandria, and in the Apostolic though less famous Church of Philippi.¹ At Rome, for example, there is apparently no Bishop (in the Ignatian sense) known to Clement (A.D. 96); or to Ignatius (c. A.D. 107), or to the author of the *Shepherd of Hennas* (c. A.D. 140).² **Bishops and teachers and deacons' are mentioned, 'leaders of the church who take the chief seats',³ &c., which reminds us of Catacomb paintings of Eucharistic celebrations in which almost invariably seven presbyters sit behind the Holy Table in a semi-circle, like a synagogue *sanhedrin* of elders, with its**

In the West, on the other hand, and in Egypt, the presbyteral Colleges continued for much longer to exercise the full oversight and to discharge the entire office of the Ministry. ' It is not too

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much to say that in the subapostolic age we can prove the non-existence of the monarchical Episcopate in the great Apostolic Churches of Corinth and Rome, and in the equally great and

president in the centre.⁴ Moniscopacy in Rome has its earliest clear account in *The Apostolic Tradition* (c. A.D. 217) of Hippolytus.⁵ Although it is the work of a schismatic Bishop obviously interested in embellishing and justifying his episcopal status it does give us invaluable insight into the development early in the third century. Here the Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons correspond in their way to the status of the High Priest, Priests, and Levites of the Old

Testament.⁶ Although the Bishop is not of a different order from his Presbyters, he is monarchical in status, while the second kind of Eldership whose loss Ambrose deplored in the following century has been absorbed into the Diaconate, or into the Presbyterate.⁷ By the middle of the third century a monarchical Episcopate had become general in both East and West. But in the West (and

1 J. Cooper, *Pentecostal Gift*, p. 187. As to Corinth, compare Gwatkin, *Dict. of Bible*, i, p. 301; Gore, *Church and Ministry*, p. 284.

2 'The beginning of the change dates from the time of Pius' (A.D. 140-63), and was incomplete for several generations later. John Wordsworth, *Ministry of Grace*, p. 127.

3 *The Shepherd*, II. 4. 1; III. 5- 1; III. 9. 7; cf. III. 1. 8; IX. 25. 2; 26. 2, cf. 27. 2.

4 See J. Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* (1903), Taf. 15, 27, 41, &c.

5 Irenaeus of Lyons, the teacher of Hippolytus, seems to have been a missionary Presbyter-Bishop like Timothy or Titus. There is no evidence that he was given episcopal consecration or even knew of a succession of consecrations, while in his writings the succession of Bishops is regarded as the same as the succession of Presbyters. *Adv. Haer.*, iii. 2. 2; 3. 2; iv. 26. 2, &c. See the article on Irenaeus and the Apostolic

famous Church of Alexandria, and in the Apostolic though less famous Church of Philippi.' 1 At Rome, for example, there is apparently no Bishop (in the Ignatian sense) known to Clement (A.D. 96) ; or to Ignatius (c. A.D. 110), or to the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. A.D. 140).²

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succession by Einar Molland, *Journal of Eccl. History*, 1950, vol. i, pp. i2ff.
 6 *The Apostolic Tradition*, I. iii. 4; viii. 1; ix. 2, 3.
 7 While the Presbyters are related to the O.T. Priests, they are also related to the Elders of Israel appointed by Moses: viii. 3. Hence the idea that the Presbyters form the Christian *sanhedrin*, found in Ignatius and Hermas, is continued and is found fully developed in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, ii. 25-38.

parts of the East—Egypt, Armenia) a constant tradition continued, and has never been lost, that Presbyter and Bishop are degrees of one and the same order, and that the distinction between the two offices is of ecclesiastical creation, being a matter of regulation and not of Divine ordinance. It is thus accurate to say¹ that the Monarchical Episcopate 'existed from the times of the Apostles'—or at least from the time of an Apostle—in the sense that 'in parts of the Church' it existed from within the lifetime of St. John. It is also certain that 'in some other parts, especially at Rome and Alexandria, there were at first only two orders'.² Since, then, the apostolicity and sufficiency of such Churches as, for example, those of Rome and Alexandria, Corinth and Philippi, are unquestioned,³ it follows that government and ministry such as these Churches had, is apostolic, valid, lawful and sufficient. It seems to follow, also, that there exist only two *orders* of Ministry—those namely of Presbyter or Bishop and **Elder or** Deacon, and that the Episcopate, as distinguished from the Presbyterate, is not a Divine Ordinance, or order,⁴ but is

¹ John Wordsworth, *Ministry of Grace*, p. 142.

² *Ibid.*

³ In this respect the Council of Nicaea established a very important principle, when, while enacting by its Fourth Canon

in parts of the East—Egypt, Armenia) a constant tradition continued, and has never been lost, that Presbyter and Bishop are degrees of one and the same order, and that the distinction between the two offices is of ecclesiastical creation, being a matter of regulation and not of Divine ordinance. It is thus accurate to say¹ that the Monarchical Episcopate 'existed from the times of the Apostles'—or at least from the time of an Apostle—in the sense that 'in parts of the Church' it existed from within the lifetime of St. John. It is also certain that 'in some other parts, especially at Rome and Alexandria, there were at first only two orders'.² Since, then, the apostolicity and sufficiency of such Churches as, for example, those of Rome and Alexandria, Corinth and Philippi, are unquestioned, it

that for the sake of good order the consecration of Bishops in the future required the presence of other Bishops, it recognized the Egyptian Bishops in the Council although they only had Presbyteral consecration. 'At the time of Nicaea, no one seems to have thought of such a defect as having any substance. The emphasis laid by the Fourth Canon on numerous episcopal consecrators, and so upon the imposition of episcopal hands, appears as something new, aimed at the removal of abuses rather than the suppression of the regular procedure. No one required what is now called "interconsecration" to regularize the position of the Egyptians. In the days of Nicaea, the keystone of apostolic ministry was not held to be a particular rite for the making of a Bishop. There was no general belief that valid episcopal succession was inseparable from an unbroken chain of laying on of hands. The tradition of a faith and life was the end upon which ecclesiastical rule was bent.' (*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1952, vol. iii, p. 12.)

4 cf. J. Calvin: 'In each city the presbyters selected one of their members to whom they gave the special title *Bishop*, lest, as usually happens, from equality dissensions should arise. The Bishop, however, was not so superior in honour and dignity as to have dominion over his colleagues, but as it belongs to a

follows that government and ministry such as these Churches had, is apostolic, valid,³ lawful and sufficient.¹ It seems to follow, also, that there exist only two *orders* of Ministry— those namely of Presbyter (or Bishop) and Deacon, and that the Episcopate, as distinguished from the Presbyterate, is not a Divine Ordinance, or order, but is

1 Bp. John Wordsworth, *Ministry of Grace*, p. 142.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Bp. Gore's definition of validity as equivalent to the possession of 'security of the Divine Covenant' (*Church and Ministry*, p. 64), does not seem entirely just. Security is not the criterion of validity, but its result. A thing is secure because it is valid ; it is not valid because it is secure. The appeal to spiritual anxiety in the form of advice to seek security by assent to claims which are in

president in an assembly to bring matters before them, collect their opinions, take precedence of others in consulting, advising, exhorting, guide the whole procedure by his authority, and execute what is decreed by common consent, a Bishop held the same office in a meeting of Presbyters' (*Inst.*, IV. iv. 2). 'Each Presbyter, merely to preserve order and peace, was under one Bishop, who, though he excelled others in dignity, was subject to the meeting of his brethren' (*ibid.*). Presbyters and deacons were ordained by the laying on of hands; but each bishop, with the college of Presbyters, ordained his own Presbyters. But although they all did the same act, yet because the Bishop presided, and the ordination was performed as it were under his auspices, it was said to be his. Hence ancient writers often say that a Presbyter does not differ in any respect from a Bishop except in not having the power of ordaining.' (*Inst.*, IV. iv. 15.)

an office—almost certainly *sanctioned* by St. John, probably approved by him, for its

purpose in those localities for which he may have been more directly responsible. The office therefore possesses a very high prescription and commendation; yet possesses no such prescription as to demand its adoption (as apostolically imposed) by the Church generally, either in St. John's own day or later; since such capital Churches as those of Rome and Alexandria continued to be without it—a thing impossible in the case of a Divine or Apostolic Ordinance.¹

Episcopate in this (the Ignatian or monarchical) sense is therefore not an ordinance, but an institution. It is a development within the presbyterate and from the presbyterate. It 'arose'—there was a time when it was not. But all things needful to the **being** of the Church have

question is familiar in Roman propaganda ; but it is not for imitation. A distinction is sometimes attempted between 'validity' and 'completeness,' but this seems to resolve itself into a more familiar distinction between the valid and the canonical.

¹ See Note, p. 180.

An office—almost certainly *sanctioned* by St. John, probably approved by him (possibly erected under his initiative, though of that we have no evidence),² for its purpose in those localities for which he may have been more directly responsible. The office therefore possesses a very

been from the beginning.² As an *order* the
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fundamental and essential and sufficient
 to furnish from within its commission
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 the development of the episcopate
 appears to
 have been one of delegation—or perhaps
 rather of the restriction—to a single
 Presbyter, representing the general body
 of the Presbyterate, of the exercise of
 functions which had resided in

1 Ministry of Grace, p. 121. See also
 Turner, *Cambridge Med. Hist.*, ch. vi, and
 Rawlinson, in *Foundations*, ch. viii.

² Bp. Gore, *Church and Ministry*, p. 54,
 ed. 1919, indicates with much cogency
 that the principle of 'essential finality'
 expressed in the faith once for all
 delivered, the Spirit once for all sent
 forth, the society once for all instituted,
 suggests the analogy of 'a once for all
 empowered and commissioned ministry'.
 The Presbyterate would appear to be the
 only ministry answering to the
 requirement—the Episcopate, it seems to
 be generally admitted, 'arose'. Hence the
 attempt by some modern Anglicans to
 read back the invention of Theodoret, that
 Bishops succeeded to the place of the
 Apostles, into earlier centuries and even
 into the New Testament itself: cf. K. E.
 Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry*. This is to
 ignore the teaching of the earliest *Church*
Orders, that it is Presbyters who are *in*
loco apostolorum. Cf. *The Apostolic*
Constitutions (II. 26):

'Let the Presbyters be esteemed by you to

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² See Bp. Gore, *Church and Ministry*,
 pp. 232-3.

³ *Ministry of Grace*, p. 121. See also
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 ed. 1919, indicates with much cogency
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represent us the Apostles', and (II. 28): 'Let also a double portion be set apart for the Presbyters, as for such who labour continually in the Word and Doctrine, upon the account of the Apostles, whose place they sustain, as the counsellors of the Bishop, and the crown of the Church. For they are the sanhedrin and Senate of the Church.' Cf. St. Peter's claim to be co-Presbyter with the Presbyters whom he addresses (1 Pet. v. 1), and of the description of the occupants of the Heavenly seats as Presbyters (Rev. iv. 4, 10).

presbyteral councils.¹ The ministry' acted through him—he acted in name of the ministry. He thus became the recognized *persona* of the local Church and its clergy. In his presence eventually no other Presbyter exercised office, unless as his assistant or substitute.² He offered the gifts: he celebrated the Eucharist: he blessed: he preached: he baptized: he confirmed: he took the leading part in ordination; only by his commission would another Presbyter do any of these things. With his commission another Presbyter might do and did them all:³ any presbyter was, in right of *order*, as competent as the Bishop for each of these acts—although for regularity, 'by custom' and by consent, without his authority a Presbyter might not perform them. In process of time commission to confirm or ordain became rarer, and ultimately ceased to be given;⁴ commission to preach, baptize, celebrate, &c.,

¹ Wordsworth, *Ministry of Grace*, p. 121 (2nd edit.). A clear example of this is found in Irenaeus of Lugdunum, to whom the doctrine of Apostolic Succession

forth, the society once for all instituted, suggests the analogy of 'a once for all empowered and commissioned ministry.' The Presbyterate would appear to be the only ministry answering to the requirement—the Episcopate, it seems to be generally admitted, 'arose.'

² In view of St. Peter's claim to be co-presbyter with the presbyters whom he addresses (1 Peter v. 1), and of the description of the occupants of the Heavenly seats as presbyters, some significance must be allowed to Ignatius' identification of presbyters as peculiarly representative of the Apostles. (*Magn. 6, Trail. 3.*)

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owes its origin. As E. Molland has described it: "The situation at Lugdunum seems to have been as follows. The episcopal office was "monarchical". The title *episkopos* was reserved for the president of the presbytery. *Episkopos* and *presbyteros* were not synonymous. The bishop was bishop for his lifetime and held a far more authoritative position than the presbyter. None the less Irenaeus seems to have been consecrated bishop by his fellow-presbyters' (*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1950, vol. i, p. 28). The theory that Irenaeus was consecrated Bishop when in Rome does not now seem tenable. See F. Vernet, *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, VII. 2, 2,395.

2 Wordsworth, *op. cit.* p. 156. Cf. a description of, apparently, just such a state

of affairs among the presbyters, nine in number, who served in the church of the ascetics at Nitria in the fourth century: Palladius, *Lausiac History*, vii. 5.

3 Such, at least, was the Western tradition. Hence when Order was conceived as *seven* Orders, the seventh and highest Order was the Presbyterate. The Bishop is in Order a Presbyter, but he has supreme jurisdiction and status. This was the teaching of Thomas Aquinas and was finally defined at the Council of Trent. The idea that the Bishop belongs to a still higher Order, the eighth, was an error or deviation introduced into the Western tradition by Duns Scotus. See *Royal Priesthood*, pp. 77f.

4 There does not seem to be ground for the belief current elsewhere that Confirmation and Ordination are, in some sense in which other ministerial functions are not, inherently and by the nature of the office peculiar to the Episcopate. As matter of fact, in the small communities in which the office was originally exercised, *all* functions seem to have been equally reserved to the Bishop when and where he could personally discharge them, and to have been discharged by other Presbyters when and

ordination ; only by his commission would another presbyter do any of these things. With his commission another presbyter might do and did them all: 1 any presbyter was, in right of *order*, as competent as the bishop for each of these acts—although for regularity, ' by custom' and by consent, without his authority a presbyter might not perform them. In process of time commission to confirm or ordain became rarer, and ultimately ceased to be given ; 2 commission to preach, baptize, celebrate, etc.,

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where the Bishop was absent; and this seems to have been as true of Preaching, of Baptism, or of celebration of the Eucharist, as of Confirmation or Ordination. To celebrate was indeed considered to be 'the Bishop's most important function' (Gore, *Church and Ministry*, p. 138n.); to preach was his right, and in his presence the Presbyter might not preach (Jer. *Ep. iii ad Evagrium*, quoted by Gore). Only the consecration of a Bishop required the presence of Bishops—that is after the *Council of Nicaea* which ruled (Can. IV) that at least three Bishops must assemble for the consecration. (Before this Bishops appear to have been consecrated by Presbyters in Alexandria, Antioch, Rome and Lyons; cf. Mgr. Duchesne, *Histoire Ancienne de l'Eglise*, 3rd edit. p. 94.)

In the East, Confirmation is ministered by the Presbyter as freely as is Baptism—to allege the use in it of Chrism obtained from the Bishop as an invocation of the Bishop to confirm, would make unction of the sick also an Episcopal and not a Presbyteral function. The reservation of Ordination, however, to the Bishop as guardian of unity would tend to follow his office whenever his office appeared: and when established would be more jealously guarded and less readily delegated—for the same reasons which cause Ordination under the Presbyterian system to be rigidly reserved to the Presbytery. The impression that this function at least was distinctive of the Bishop's office, and that, in respect at least of the right to ordain, he differed characteristically from other Presbyters, rapidly gained currency and is often met with.

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pastoral charge, but the Bishop's commission, whether in the form of licence or of induction, remains under the Episcopal system as necessary as ever it was. It seems, then, that the Episcopal office **is** formed not so much 'by elevation out of the presbyterate' as by restriction of other

Presbyters. Under the monarchical system the 'Bishop' is a **P**resbyter who continues to exercise the full function of his order;¹

the 'Presbyter' is a **P**resbyter who, in the interests of order and of episcopal government, is canonically and customarily restrained from exercising his function except when and in so far as the Bishop requires his assistance. Canon and custom make the Presbyter in the East the ordinary minister of Baptism and of Confirmation, but not of Ordination; in the West they make him the ordinary minister of Baptism but not of Confirmation—and of Ordination only in conjunction with the Bishop.² In either case, however, the restrictions are restrictions upon the exercise of functions which are, and which (since the order is divinely created) remain, inherent in his order. Such restrictions are only regulative—they cannot denude of capacity for what God has given.

At the Reformation the clear and settled intention of the Reformers generally was to revert to primitive forms of Christian Institution, as discoverable within Scripture and as scripturally warranted. Applying this principle to the Ministry, they were necessarily thrown back upon the presbyterate as it existed before the **power of ordination came to be restricted normally to the Bishop.**

At that point they found it (as modern historical criticism

¹ cf. Wordsworth, *Ministry of Grace*, pp. 125-41.

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finds it) the essential and fundamental Ministry, containing in itself all functions and exercising them in right of *order*. The Reformers had been trained in the general tradition of the Western Church that Episcopate and Presbyterate are only degrees of one order:¹ that Ordination to the presbyterate is the grace-conferring sacrament which consecration to the episcopate is not: that the Bishop is, in order, no more than a **Presbyter** entrusted by the Church with a duty of representation

and superintendence; and that the limitations imposed on other **Presbyters** are only canonical. The **Presbyterate** remained in its essential nature what it was as apostolically given, indefeasibly retaining the character and powers impressed upon it at its creation. The guiding principle of the Reformers was that **deviations** were to be set aside, and Scriptural discipline restored as at the first. As regards Ministry this meant that the presbyterate should be restored to its primitive position.² We do not find at the Reformation, or for some time afterwards, any hostility to Episcopacy as a form of government.³ We find only a resolve to reclaim for the Presbyterate recognition of its fundamental character, and to deny to the Episcopate any *divinely given* right to absorb the functions of the Presbyterate, or to be reckoned **alone** essential. **Thus the Reformed Church insists that the order of the Presbyterate is in the strict sense the only order of**

¹ The traditional teaching is clearly stated by Morinus in his work, *De Sacris Ordinationibus*, 1665, III, p. 30: *episcopi et presbyteri una ordinatio est*. It was only after the work of Morinus was published that another view really gained ground, namely, that there were three

of capacity for what God has given.¹

At the Reformation the clear and settled intention of the Reformers generally was to revert to primitive forms of Christian Institution, as discoverable within Scripture and as scripturally warranted. Applying this principle to the Ministry, they were necessarily thrown back upon the presbyterate as it existed before the development of mono-episcopacy.

At that point they found it (as modern historical criticism

¹ Cf. Wordsworth, *Min. of Grace*, pp. 125-141.

² Anglican *Ordinal*, 'The Bishop with the priests present shall lay their hands severally,' etc. And see Wordsworth,

Min. of Grace, 2nd edit., pp. 166-167.

³ See *Correspondence in Church Times*, June to August 1914.

finds it) the essential and fundamental Ministry, containing in itself all functions and exercising them in right of *order*. The Reformers had been trained in the general tradition of the Western Church that Episcopate and Presbyterate are only degrees of one order: that Ordination to the presbyterate is the grace-conferring sacrament which consecration to the episcopate is not: that the Bishop is, in order, no more than a **presbyter** entrusted by the Church with a duty of representation and superintendence; and that the limitations imposed on other **presbyters** are only canonical. The **presbyterate** remained in its essential nature what it was as apostolically given, indefeasibly retaining the character and powers impressed upon it at its creation. The guiding principle of the Reformers was that developments were to be set aside, and scriptural discipline restored as at the first.¹ As regards Ministry this meant that the presbyterate should be restored to its primitive position. We do not find at the Reformation, or for some time afterwards, any hostility to

orders (Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon), but this view cannot legitimately be read back into Reformation or pre-Reformation times in the West. See J. M. Barkley, 'The Meaning of Ordination', in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1956, vol. ix, pp. 135-60. But cp. *Anglican Ordinal*, 1552 *et seq.* See also Appendix R.

2 Hence Calvin wrote in his *Epistle to Cardinal Sadoletto*: 'We have not the least objection that the discipline that was sanctioned by the ancient canons should be in force in the present day, and be carefully observed; nay, we have always protested that the miserable condition into which the Church had fallen was owing to nothing more than its enervation by luxury and indulgence. For the Body of the Church, to cohere well, must be bound together by discipline as well as with sinews. For how, on your part, is discipline either observed or desired? Where are those ancient canons with which, like a bridle, Bishops and Presbyters were kept to their duty?'

3 See e.g. Knox's letter to the Assembly of 1572; Calvin, *Letter to King of Poland*, 1554. Again Calvin wrote in his treatise on *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* the following challenge: 'Let them show us a hierarchy in which bishops are distinguished, but not for refusing to be subject to Christ, in which they depend upon Him as the only Head, and act solely with reference to Him, in which they cultivate entirely fellowship with each other, bound together by no other tie than His truth; then, indeed, I will confess that there is no anathema too strong for those who do not regard them with reverence, and yield them the fullest obedience.'

the ministry.¹ This is the real meaning of the so-called parity of ministers in the Church of Scotland, but this does not preclude

Episcopacy as a form of government.² We find only a resolve to reclaim for the Presbyterate recognition of its fundamental character, and to deny to the Episcopate any *divinely given* right to absorb the functions of the Presbyterate, or *itself* to be reckoned essential.

¹ Isaiah i. 26.

² See e.g. Knox to Assembly of 1572; Calvin, *Letter to King of Poland*, 1554.

distinctions in jurisdiction either in the Church Courts to which Presbyters are subject or among Presbyters themselves.

Under this common principle the Reformation pursued different courses in different countries. In the Scandinavian countries and in England the Episcopate was continued, but in the former at least with clear recognition of its dependence on ecclesiastical institution. In the Reformed Church of Hungary, the largest Presbyterian church in Europe, Bishops were retained within the Presbyterian system.

In some Lutheran countries and in Scotland, Superintendents (analogous to the Bishop of the sub-apostolic age) were substituted.² In France, Switzerland, and parts of Germany, the primitive Council of Presbyters was revived. These were varying applications of one doctrine of ministry: namely, that the Presbyterate is the highest Order of Ministry and is constituted the Stewardship of the mysteries of God in Word and Sacrament.

In reviving and asserting this doctrine, the Reformers proceeded precisely as they did in restoring the chalice to the laity—not abolishing or changing anything which the Church has received from the Lord, but resting in the security of obedience to original and apostolic discipline. They 'placed the crown again' on the heads of those on whom the Apostles set it, that is, of the Presbyters.³

ORDINATION

Ordination is a solemn setting apart of a person to some public Church office.⁴ It is manifest by the Word of God that no man ought to take upon him the office of a Minister of the Gospel

¹ See Appendix, p. 124.

² The nature of this ministry has never been better described than by Erskine of Dun, Superintendent of Angus and

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Mearns, in his letter to the Earl of Morton in 1572 (see Appendix M); Calderwood, *History*, vol. I 11, pp. 156ff. It is clear from this that the office of Superintendent was not designed as a temporary office in the Kirk, as is often averred: *Register of the Kirk Sessions of St. Andrews*, I. 75. See also John 4 Lasco, *Forma ac Ratio*, on which J. Knox based his order for the ordination (i.e. re-ordination) of the Superintendent; G. Donaldson, 'The Polity of the Scottish Church, 1560-1600', *Scottish Church History Society Record*, XI (pp. 212-26), p. 217n.; and G. Donaldson, W. Croft Dickinson and I. A. Milne, *Source Book of Scottish History*, vol. ii, 2nd edit. 1959, 'The Polity and Worship of the Reformed Church', pp. 207-13.

3 'Super Capita Sacerdotum, id est, Ministrorum Christi': Smeton, *Orthodoxa Responsio*, p. 6. (1579).

4 *Form of Church Government*, 'Touching the Doctrine of Ordination'.

until he is lawfully called and ordained thereunto.¹ Ordination is always to be continued in the Church.² Every Minister of the Word is to be ordained by the imposition of hands, and prayer, with fasting.³ The term Ordination is used indifferently of various offices as well as of the presbyterate; e.g. of the diaconate (both male and female), as well as of those orders which anciently were known as 'minor' (reader, doorkeeper, &c.). There is no necessary reason why it should not be applied to the making of an elder, his office being a 'church office', though, for avoidance of confusion, the term 'admission' may in that case be preferred, and has been used.⁴

In the same way the laying on of hands is a general symbol of benediction, of consecration, of the transmission of office, or of the bestowal of authority: as, for example, on penitents when reconciled, in confirmation of the

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baptized, on Deacons and (in the East) on Deaconesses, in consecration of Bishops—as well as in the ordination of Presbyters. Ordination is not a mechanical but a spiritual action, in which the effect of the act depends on the appointed end, which is indicated by the nature of the office in question, as well as by the words which accompany the action, whether in the form of prayer or of declaration. In the case of Ordination to an order of Ministry divinely instituted, the Divinely given end necessarily determines the nature of the act. Properly Ordination means ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, which is strictly speaking the only Order in the Ministry.⁵

1 *Form of Church Government*, 'Directory for the Ordination of Ministers'.

2 Ibid., 'Concerning the doctrinal part of Ordination of Ministers'.

3 Ibid.; cf. the *Second Helvetic Confession* (approved by the Church of Scotland in 1566): 'Let those who are elected be ordained by the presbyters with public prayers and laying on of hands'; and *The Second Book of Discipline*, III. 6: 'Ordination is the separation and sanctifying of the person appointed to God and His Kirk, after he is well tried and found qualified. The ceremonies of Ordination are fasting, earnest prayer, and imposition of hands of the Eldership.' See Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections*, I. i. 24, 25, 26.

4 This was the word used in the *Acts of Assembly*, 1582, Sess. 12, laying down the order for the election and admission of elders. The same form was used for the admission of Deacons. See also Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, 1641, p. 30. 'Ordination and admission' is used in the Act of 1932, X.

5 The medieval theologians taught that 'the Sacrament of Order is ordained in

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3 Ibid., 'Directory for the Ordination of Ministers.'

4 Ibid., 'Concerning the doctrinal part of Ordination of Ministers.'

5 *Form of Church Government*.

order to the Eucharist, which is the Sacrament of Sacraments' (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summ. Theol. Suppl.*, q. 27. 4. 2-3). Because for them the Sacrament of Order involved seven 'orders' all culminating in the seventh, it could be said of the other six that they were indirectly 'in order to the Eucharist', although only in the Presbyterate was there fulness of Order. For the Reformed Church ordination is 'in Order to Word and Sacrament', and strictly speaking 'ordination' is applicable only to those ordained to this end.

It has often been discussed whether (other conditions being present) the use of imposition of hands is necessary to Ministerial Ordination. The essence of Ordination on the external side being **the orderly devolvement of commissioned responsibility and authorization**—the sending by those who are sent—and the object of the accompanying rite being to make evident the bestowal of commission by the commissioned, it may be agreed that, so long as this intention is clear and is evidenced by word and act, the particular action employed for the purpose may be held indifferent.¹ The teaching of the Church of Scotland is that we are tied to the use of imposition of hands by Apostolic example and universal prescription.² 'The *ceremonies* of Ordination are fasting, earnest prayer, and the imposition of the hands of the Eldership.'³

THE MINISTERS OF ORDINATION

Every Minister of the Word is to be ordained by the imposition of hands, and prayer, with fasting, by those preaching presbyters to whom it doth belong,⁴ by those to whom the imposition of

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I Euchologion, p. 397, edition 1905

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ordination to take place through tactual laying on of hands at all. Laying on of hands must be regarded simply as the means used by the Church to show that she is making the appointment and bestowing the authority: some such "outward and visible sign" to mediate the commission is doubtless required, but not necessarily this particular sign.' (Rawlinson, *Foundations*, p. 399). The question is of importance only because so much more than need be has been made of the omission of imposition of hands, proposed in the *First Book of Discipline*. Rawlinson's position, above quoted, is substantially that of Calvin (*Inst.*, IV. xxxi, 6), and of George Gillespie (*Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland*, c. xiv), and presumably that of the authors of the *First Book of Discipline*, which is sufficiently emphatic as to the need of ordination, whether indicated by contact or by benediction.

2 This was very powerfully argued by George Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions*, 1649, chs. IV and VIII.

3 i.e. of the Presbyterate; *Second Book of Discipline*, iii. The Westminster standards revised the order to 'the imposition of hands and prayer' apparently laying comparatively more stress on judicial authorization than at the Reformation where the invocation of the Spirit upon the ordained was regarded as primary. Cf. Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, 1641, II: 'According to the simplicity of the Apostolical and ancient church, [they] content themselves with fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands.'

4 *Form of Church Government*, 'Touching the Doctrine of Ordination'.

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the Ministry, have power to join in the setting apart of others.² *The full teaching here*

[that is, of the *Form of Church Government* as a whole, as to 'Derivation of the Ministry'] *is that the Christian ministry derives not from the people but from the pastors, that a scriptural ordinance provides for this ministry being renewed through the ordination of presbyter by presbyters, that this ordinance draws its origin from the Apostles who were themselves presbyters, and that through them it passes to its source in Christ.*³

'The Church of Scotland allows no power in the people, but only in the Pastors of the Church, to appoint or ordain Church officers.'⁴ 'Our Church doth condemn any doctrine that tends to support the people's power of ordaining their ministers.'⁵ 'Ordination is the appointment of Jesus Christ, conveying a character by the instrumentality of the Office Bearers of the Church.' 'Against both' (i.e. both those who despise Ministry, and those who represent it 'as given by Christ to the people and transferred by them at their pleasure to those whom they choose') 'we presbyterians join with the Church of Rome and the Church of England in holding that the persons vested with Church government derive their powers not from the people, but from Jesus Christ by His Ministers.'⁶

1 Form of Church Government, 10, 'Concerning the doctrinal part of Ordination of Ministers'. There must be at least three ministers co-operating in this act, ibid.

2 Ibid., 'Special Rules'.

3 Report to the General Assembly of 1911 by Special Committee on the Petition of Rev. J. A. D. Macdonald. General Assembly Reports for 1911, p. 1170. (Mr. Macdonald was a Wesleyan minister applying for recognition as ordained. The Committee recommended that the petition be not granted. Mr. Macdonald

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'The Church of Scotland allows no power in the people, but only in the Pastors of the Church, to appoint or ordain Church officers.'¹ 'Our Church doth condemn any doctrine that tends to support the people's power of ordaining their ministers.'² 'Ordination is the appointment of Jesus Christ, conveying a character by the instrumentality of the Office Bearers of the Church.' 'Against both'

(i.e. both those who despise Ministry, and those who represent it 'as given by Christ to the people and transferred by them at their pleasure to those whom they choose') 'we Presbyterians join with the Church of Rome and the Church of England in holding that the persons vested with Church government derive their powers not from the people, but from Jesus Christ by His Ministers.'³

accordingly received Ordination from the Presbytery of Edinburgh.) See the Memorandum by Alexander Martin, *Presbyterian Orders and Admission of Ministers from Other Churches*, Church of Scotland Committee on Publications, Edinburgh, 1941, pp. i8f., 22f.

4 *Act of Assembly*, 1698, vi. 3 : 'Anent the calumny of Thomas Cripps, Rector of Bury, in a sermon preached by him.' See George Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellany Questions*, 1649, pp. 8f., 24f., 57f.

5 Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections*, Book I. i. 21.

6 Principal George Hill, *Lectures*. See ii.

2: 'While parts of the Apostolic office expired with the persons to whom it was committed by the Lord Jesus, the right of performing all the ministerial functions which were intended to be perpetuated in the Christian Church is conceived to be conveyed by the Act of Ordination, so that every person who is ordained is "as much a successor of the Apostles as any teacher of religion can be".' 'What Erskine's *Institutes* are to the Scotch Lawyer, Hill's *Lectures* are to the Scotch divine' (Cunningham, *Church Hist. of Scotland*, II. xxxviii).

The doctrine of succession as an element necessary to constitute 'lawful ministry'¹ is thus the doctrine of the Church of Scotland

and of its standards. As Samuel Rutherford expressed it, 'The established and settled order of calling of pastors is by succession of pastor to pastor'.²

It has been continuously taught in its Acts and **confession**, probably since 1560,³ certainly since 1566, and has been asserted and maintained by its Divines in an uninterrupted tradition to the present day.⁴ **On the other hand, the Church of Scotland has been very conscious that ministerial succession cannot be abstracted from the living continuity of the whole Church as the redeemed people of God. In itself ministerial succession has no importance, it has importance only**

1 Form of Church Government, 10,' Concerning the doctrinal part of Ordination of Ministers.'

2 *Ibid.*, 'Special Rules.'

3 *Report to the General Assembly of 1911 by Special Committee on the Petition of Rev. J. A. D. Macdonald*. General Assembly Reports for 1911, p. 1170. (Mr. Macdonald was a Wesleyan minister applying for recognition as ordained. The Committee recommended that the petition be not granted. Mr. Macdonald accordingly received Ordination from the Presbytery of Edinburgh.)

1 Act of Assembly, 1698, vi. 3 : 'Anent the calumny of Thomas Cripps, Rector of Bury, in a sermon preached by him.'

2 Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections*, Book I. i. 21.

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within the whole life and doctrine of the church. It is *this doctrine* of succession that has been so dear to the Church of Scotland. Four main elements are to be distinguished in this doctrine.

1 'Lawful ministry' rather than 'valid ministry' has usually been the expression preferred by the Church of Scotland through its history since the Reformation. The word 'validity' carries confusion and ambiguity that dates from the Donatist controversy and is almost inevitably misleading. If Christ is Himself the principal Ordainer then 'lawfulness' must have a Christological reference—i.e. the 'validity' of order can only be established or verified by reference to Him, i.e. to justification by His Grace to be 'under law to Christ'. But because it is Christ acting in His Body, the Church on earth, 'lawfulness' must have an ecclesiological reference, i.e. 'validity' of order is also to be established or verified by reference to the Church. Ministry is truly 'lawful' only when the reference to the Church is subordinate to the primary reference to Christ, for the Church is not in control of Christ but serves Him alone, who rules over the Church and uses it as He will and as His instrument. See D. Paton, *Essays in Anglican Self-Criticism*, pp. 201 f.
2 Cited from T. Walker, *Scottish Theology and Theologians*, 2nd edit., 1888, p. 188. See also *Ius Divinum Ministerii Evangelici*, 1654, I, p. 185 ; II, pp. 33, 45.
3 See W. M. MacMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church*, pp. 343f. When the *Scots Confession* 1560 (XVIII) and the *First Book of Discipline* insist that lineal descent (i.e. *perpetua successio episcoporum*) is not one of the marks of the true Church (i.e. the true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the Sacraments and Ecclesiastical discipline), they nevertheless require regular ordination by ministerial authority and agency (see the

It has been continuously taught in its Acts and Confessions, probably since 1560,¹ certainly since 1566, and has been asserted and maintained by its Divines in an uninterrupted tradition to the present day.²

order for the ordination of Superintendents, *Book of Common Order*), while it is insisted that those who tamper with Christ's seals (the Sacraments) without authority, are 'even worthy of death'. What the Scottish Reformation repudiated was the idea that 'a political or ceremonial succession' (*Works of John Knox*, III, p. 480) was *in itself* enough to constitute Rome to be the true Church (see also *Works of John Knox*, VI, 697f.). Succession has a proper and legitimate place, but when it is made the *sine qua non* of the true Church, it has to be called in question as a perversion of the truth.

4 In order to clear up any doubts about the matter the General Assembly enacted in 1597 that there should be 'a uniformity in the ordination of the ministry throughout the whole country, Imposition of hands' (Calderwood, *History of the Church of Scotland*, V, p. 642). An account of the doctrine of Ministerial Succession, as held in the Church of Scotland, will be found in *Reunion* (Gardner Hitt, Edinburgh, 1909), pp. 17-48.

First, a true ministerial succession is organically related to succession in doctrine, that is in doctrinal obedience to the teaching of the Apostles.¹ It belongs to the basic concept of succession that it is a succession ordered in accordance with the Apostolic doctrine; otherwise it is only a succession in disorder. This organic relation of doctrine and order belongs to the very essence of the Reformed Church. Calvin expressed it thus: 'Rule in the Church, the pastoral office, and all other matters of order, resemble the body, whereas the doctrine which regulates the due worship of God, and points out the ground on which the consciences of men must rest their hope of salvation, is the *soul* which animates the body, renders it lively and active, in short makes it, not to be a dead and useless carcase.'² Wherever there is a

1 It is impossible here to enter on reasons for declining to recognise the *First Book of Discipline* as an authoritative expression of the Church's mind. Some of these reasons are given in *Reunion* (Gardner Hitt, 1909, pp. 22-23). Whatever its authority, it is apparently inconsistent with itself in its position that succession is not a mark of the true Church; since it insists on Ordination by ministerial authority and agency, judging those who tamper with Christ's seals (the Sacraments) without authority, to be 'even worthy of death.' The intention was to deny that possession of succession was *in itself* enough to constitute Rome to be the true Church. The Latin translation (prepared for transmission abroad) cleared up this ambiguity—the phrase there is *successio Bpiscoporum*.

2 An account of the doctrine of Ministerial Succession, as held in the Church of Scotland, will be found in *Reunion*, pp. 17-48 (Hitt, Edinburgh, 1909).

ministerial succession, however faultless it may be formally, it is nothing but an empty husk if it is divided from the faithful tradition of the Apostolic doctrine, because it is in reference to this doctrine that the ministerial succession has its sole place and justification.³

Second, a true ministerial succession is organically related to the Word which is ministered. This means that we cannot think of the ministry as a self-perpetuating succession, but as continuously dependent upon the Word it serves, for it is from the Word that it draws its strength, out of the Word that it lives, and by the Word that it is itself ordered. It was an oral setting and the oral tradition of the Word before the New Testament was written down which ordered the Church and instituted and shaped the ministry, and built it upon the Apostolic foundation in Christ. It is still that prophetic and creative Word, uttered with all its dominical and apostolic authority, that governs the Church and orders its mission and it is only by serving that Word that the ministry has its *raison d'être* in history and therefore it is only in that organic relation to it that it is anything at all. Therefore the emphasis is to be laid not upon the ministers in their succession but upon the objective and living Word who Himself presides as Lord wherever His Word is faithfully proclaimed, and who uses that proclaimed Word as the sceptre whereby He orders His

³ cf. J. L. Ainslie, *The Doctrine of Ministerial Order in the Reformed Churches of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 1940, p. 228.

2 *The Necessity of Reforming the Church, Tracts*, I, pp. 126f.; see *The Second Book of Discipline*, I. 1-7.

3 cf. Lord Balfour of Burleigh (*Presbyterianism in Scotland*, p. 44):

"There is in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches a *perpetua successio presbyterorum* from before the Reformation. But its value to the first Reformers was nil."

Church throughout all its historical life and gives it its appointed place within His Kingdom. *Third*, a true ministerial succession is organically related to the whole continuity of the redeemed life of the people of God. In other words, ministerial succession has its place only within the basic continuity of the Church as the Body of Christ on earth and in history. Here the focus of attention is to be directed to Holy Baptism as the sacrament of incorporation into Christ, and as the Sacrament setting forth the fundamental union and communion of every member of the Body of Christ. It is precisely because Baptism is the great sacrament of living union with and in Christ, that it provides the sacramental basis for the continuity of the Church in all its life and mission through the ages, and therefore also for the continuing of the ministry within that unity of the One Body.

Fourth, a true ministerial succession is organically related to the continuous fellowship in the mystery of Christ which He freely grants in His grace. Here the focus of attention is upon the Lord's Supper as the Sacrament in which we are ever granted renewal in the New Covenant of the Body and Blood of Christ. The Church celebrates the Eucharist in the ordered continuity of its worship and life, and it is celebrated in the Church by a ministry duly authorized in the orderly devolvement of responsibility within the sphere of the Apostolic mission and commission, but as often as the Church celebrates Holy Communion it acknowledges that it is not

upon the faithfulness of the ministry or upon its unbroken succession that it depends, but solely upon the Covenant mercies of Christ which He renews to us in that Sacrament. In other words the Church relies at no point upon its own obedience, but upon the *promise* of Christ to be with her, to maintain and uphold her, to forgive and cleanse her, and in spite of all her failures and lapses and omissions to gather her within His everlasting Covenant to which He is unfailingly faithful. The Church is essentially a Church in Covenant with Christ, and the ministry belongs to His Covenant mercies. That is why the Church of Scotland has always sought to find its justification not in its own orders or succession,¹ important as these are in their proper place and perspective, but solely in Him who in Word and Sacrament

¹ To do so would be 'confidence in the flesh'. No one has had better ground to boast of perfection and faithfulness in tradition, in valid ordinance and divine authorization than St. Paul—but all that he counted loss for Christ (Phil. iii. 7). It is in obedience to this Apostolic example that we are summoned.

freely extends to us His Covenant of Grace. The obedience of the Church, the correctness of its orders, the faithfulness of its ministry to the Apostolic teachings and ordinances are all involved in the sin and relativity of our broken and fallen human life, but the covenant faithfulness of Christ unfailingly undergirds all as we look to Him and, in spite of our deficiencies, assimilates and binds us into living unity and continuity with Himself. Of all that, the real and whole continuity of the Church through history in Christ, ministerial succession, or succession in the laying on of hands, is the apostolically appointed sign and attestation. Ministerial succession in no way secures the possession

of the Holy Spirit nor does it guarantee a lawful ministry. But because it is the apostolically appointed ordinance, it cannot be contemned or neglected without disobedience and loss.

AUTHORITY TO ORDAIN

Ordination is the act of a presbytery: the power of ordering the work is in the whole presbytery.¹ The preaching presbyters

orderly associated either in cities or neighbouring villages are those to whom the imposition of hands appertains for the congregations within their borders.²

Under the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, the Presbytery as a Court includes representative Elders, and these act with the **ministers** in the legal processes which terminate in appointing the ordination to take place. In the Ordination itself they do not act.

Ordination is conferred by the **Presbyters** of the **Court**, proceeding upon resolution of the **Court** as a whole; or it may be conferred by a delegation of their number 'specially appointed by the presbytery' for the purpose.³ 'The magisterial power to ordain⁴ is given to the **Presbytery**: and the **ministerial** (or executive) power to regularly associated preaching presbyters.'⁵ Presbyters that they may ordain must be 'orderly associated' either as the Ministerial constituent of a regular court, or as delegated by such a court. Individual presbyters cannot ordain. Presbyters may not voluntarily associate themselves to ordain.

1 Form of Church Government, 'Touching the Power of Ordination'. This is the doctrine of the corporate episcopate; see Royal Priesthood, ch. V.

2 Form of Church Government, 'Touching the Power of Ordination'.

3 Report, Macdonald Petition, p. 1173. Form of Church Government, 'Directory for Ordination', 5, 8.

4 Or rather to authorize Ordination.

5 Report, p. 1169.

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Under the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, the Presbytery as a Court includes representative **lay** Elders, and these act with the **Clergy** in the legal processes which terminate in appointing the ordination to take place. In the Ordination itself they do not act.

Ordination is conferred by the **presbyters** of the **court**, proceeding upon resolution of the **court** as a whole; or it may be conferred by a delegation of their number 'specially appointed by the presbytery' for the purpose.² 'The magisterial power to ordain³ is given to the **presbytery**: and the **Ministerial** (or executive) power to regularly associated preaching presbyters.'⁴ Presbyters that they may ordain must be 'orderly associated' either as the Ministerial constituent of a regular court, or as

They must act in their place in the Church's system. There must be behind them authority; and the authority must be that of the Church as a whole.¹ Thus, for example, Colleagues in the Pastorate of a single congregation (even though sufficient in number) are not thereby 'orderly associated' for the purpose of ordination.² Presbyters orderly associated may ordain only 'for the congregations within their bounds', which mark the limits of their jurisdiction as a court. To ordain for a more general purpose (as for Foreign or Mission Service) requires the authorization of the General Assembly.

THE ELDERSHIP

'As there were in the Jewish Church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the Church; so Christ, who hath instituted government and governors ecclesiastical in the Church, hath furnished some in His Church, besides the Ministers of the Word, with gifts for government and with commission to exercise the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the Minister in the government of the Church. Which officers Reformed Churches commonly call Elders.'³

For scriptural justification of this office Calvin referred to i Tim. v. 17, Rom. xii. 8 and 1 Cor. xii. 28, which he interpreted in the light of evidence from the Fathers.⁴ John Knox's *Book of Common Order* referred to Rom. xii, 1 Cor. xii, and Eph. iv. *The Second Book of Discipline* refers also to 1 Tim. v. 17: 'The Eldership is a Spiritual function, as is the ministry. Elders once lawfully called to the office, and having gifts of God meet to exercise the same, may not

delegated by such a court. Individual presbyters cannot ordain. Presbyters may not voluntarily associate themselves to ordain.

3 Form of Church Government, 'Touching the Power of Ordination.'

1 Form of Church Government, 'Touching the Power of Ordination.'

2 Report, Macdonald Petition, p. 1173.

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LAY ELDERSHIP (This appears after the paragraph on deacons)

As there were in the Jewish Church elders of the people joined with the priests and levites in the government of the Church ; so

Christ, Who hath instituted government and governors ecclesiastical in the Church, hath furnished some in His Church, besides the Ministers of the Word, with gifts for government and with commission to exercise the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the Minister in the government of the Church. Which officers Reformed Churches commonly call

leave it again. Nevertheless such a number of Elders may be chosen in certain congregations that a part of them may relieve another for a reasonable space, as was among the Levites under the Law in serving the Temple.⁵ Additional support is adduced for this institution from (a) Old Testament precedents; (b) the fact that among the flock persons are found with those gifts of the Holy Spirit which are requisite for counsel and rule: which gifts ought to be recognized and utilized by the Church. To such persons

1 Report, p. 1169.

2 Form of Church Government,

'Touching the Power of Ordination'.

3 Form of Church Government, 'Other Church Governors'; see G. D. Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder* (1935).

4 Inst. IV. 11. 1; 17. 43; Comm. on / Tim. v. 17; see above p. 81.

5 The Second Book of Discipline, VI. 2.

the Church therefore gives commission for the regular exercise of the same.

Whatever be the grounds of justification alleged for this office,¹ it seems very clear that the Scottish Elder more nearly reproduces the deacon or deacon-elder of the Early Church than the 'deacon' in any of the other churches today.² His office is essentially diaconal and complementary to that of the Presbyter who is ordained to dispense the Word and Sacraments.

Presbyter and Elder are not variants of the same office. Unlike the Presbyter the Elder is a *representative* of the people who takes part with the ministry (i) in assisting at the celebration of Holy Communion (i.e. not in the dispensing but in the receiving³), (2) in matters of discipline

(3) in government and in the administration of affairs.⁴

The use of the word *Elder* in this connexion

Elders.¹

Scriptural institution is not claimed by our standards for this office;

but they adduce in support of it (a) an Old Testament precedent; (b) the fact that among the flock persons are found with those gifts of the Holy Spirit which are requisite for counsel and rule : which gifts ought to be recognised and utilised by the Church. To such persons

1 Report, p. 1169.

2 Form of Church Government, '

'Touching the Power of Ordination.'

1 Form of Church Govt., 'Other Church Governors.'

the Church therefore gives commission for the regular exercise of the same ; **not as if thereby creating an ordinance, but by the right inherent in the Church ' to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the . . . government of the Church.'** ²

is intended to distinguish the holder of this office from the presbyter or minister of the Word. The Westminster Standards preferred the term 'Church-Governors' but in Scotland 'Ruling Elder' became a common designation.⁵

Elders are **appointed** from the Christian laity by the Kirk Session of each parish, and are publicly admitted to office by the Minister, with prayer. Their appointment was originally annual, But **according to the *Second Book of Discipline* it was to be a life office.**

An elder from each parish, chosen by its session, represents it in the Presbytery of the bounds and Synod of the province.

Each

1 Some Presbyterians fail to find adequate Biblical authority for this office; cf. J. McKerrrow, *The Office of Ruling Elder in the Christian Church* (Edinburgh, 1846) ch. V; J. M. Ross, *What is an Elder?* (Presbyterian Church of England), pp. 6f. The institution of the Eldership can nevertheless be justified, it is claimed, on the ground of the Church's inherent right 'to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the government of the Church' (*Conf. of Faith*, XXXI. 3). (See also *ibid.*, i. 6:

The use of the word *Elder* in this connection

is not derived from Scripture, but is referred, by the Form of Church Government as quoted above, to current Reformed usage. It is not, that is to say, a translation of the Scriptural word *Presbyter*, but of the Latin *Senior*, or French *Seigneur*, as then and still employed in the Reformed Churches of France and Switzerland. The precedent quoted¹ indicates 'Elders of the people.' They are representative of the flock, taking part with the Ministry (1) in matters of discipline, (2) in government, (3) in administration of affairs.

Elders are chosen from the Christian laity by the Kirk Session of each parish, and are publicly admitted to office by the Minister, with prayer. Their appointment was originally annual, but under present legislation lasts as long as local connection is maintained. The office can be resigned. The appointment of an elder is for a particular parish and congregation, and lapses when he ceases to be a member of the Kirk Session to which he had been admitted. An elder from each parish, chosen by its session, represents it in the Presbytery of the bounds and Synod of the province,

'There are some circumstances concerning . . . the government of the Church common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are to be observed.')

2 See above, pp. 8of. Cf. *The First Book of Discipline* X. 4. 'The Elders, being elected, must be admonished of their office, which is to assist the Minister in all public affairs of the Church.'

3 Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, I. iii. 3.

4 2 Chron. xix. 8. For the general function, see further references given by the

Form of Church Government to Rom. xii. 7 and 1 Cor. xii. 28. Under the heading of 'Officers of particular Congregations', the *Form of Church Government* seems, however, to make a distinction between 'ruling', which is a function ascribed to the Pastor, and that of 'joining in government', which is ascribed to the Elder.

5 Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections*, VII.

2 *Conf. of Faith*, xxxi. 3. (See also *Ibid.* i. 6 : 'There are some circumstances concerning . . . the government of the Church common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the Word, which are to be observed.')

(This quoted at a different place)

1 2 Chron. xix. 8. For the general

Calvin's terms were *Senior, Seigneur,* or *Ancien*, which were also employed in the Reformed Churches of France and Switzerland.

year the Presbytery appoints as commissioners to the General Assembly a number of Elders equal to the number of ministers.¹

The Church of Scotland has always taught that the Elder is not a minister;² that he does not labour in the Word and doctrine or administer the Sacraments.³ The Westminster Assembly made it quite clear that the Elder is not a Presbyter, but is to be regarded as a representative of the people in assisting the pastoral work of the ministry while ministers were not regarded as representatives of the people but as sent to the people by Christ. The Elder is not ordained by the laying on of hands. He is set apart with prayer. In Pardovan's *Collections* the Elders' duties are described under three heads.

(1) They are to assist in seeking the fruit of the Word sown among the people by the ministry, and to assist in the discipline of communicants and in visiting the sick.
(2) They are to have 'certain bounds' assigned to them for regular visitation in the interests of the pastoral care of the congregation, when it is fitting for them to set some time apart for prayer.

function, further references given by the *Form of Church Government* to Rom. xii. 7 and 1 Cor. xii. 28. Under the heading of 'Officers of particular Congregations,' the *Form of Church Government* seems, however, to make a distinction between 'ruling,' which is a function ascribed to the Pastor, and that of 'joining in government,' which is ascribed to the Elder.

And a proportion of elders (which varies with legislation) is sent by each presbytery to the General Assembly of the year.

As representing the Flock of God, as well as by the solemnity of their admission and

by the extent and weight of the duties entrusted to them, their office may be considered a spiritual office of high dignity

and importance. It is not, however, an order of the sacred Ministry, and it includes

none of the functions of the presbyterate in relation to Worship, Sacraments, or Orders.¹

(3) They also have more public duties in the Church courts, in which commissioned Elders have the same power as pastors. 'Howbeit by the practice of our Church, the execution of some decrees of the Church belong to the pastors only, such as the imposition of hands, pronouncing the sentences of excommunication and absolution, the receiving of penitents, the intimations of

1 J. T. Cox: *Practice and Procedure of the Church of Scotland*, 5th edit., 1964, p. 183.

2 'They differ from the Minister in that they preach not the Word nor minister the Sacrament' (John Knox, *Book of Common Order*, ii). The Minister is always Moderator of the Kirk Session and is not responsible to the Kirk Session, but to the Presbytery, for the discharge of his ministerial functions. Though the Elders assist the Minister in the distribution of the Elements at the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Supper is a ministerial, not a sessional, act and the Kirk Session does not, accordingly, require to be constituted. 'As the Minister is allowed, subject to his Presbytery, a large discretion in the methods of his ministry, the place of worship and other ecclesiastical buildings belonging to the congregation are at his disposal for the purpose of his office. He can use them, and grant permission to use them, for all purposes connected with the congregation or any of its organizations; and for purposes which are of religious, ecclesiastical, or charitable nature, though not connected with the congregation, subject only to the control of the Presbytery . . . neither the Kirk Session nor the Deacons' Court nor the

1 See Mair's *Digest of Church Laws*, 3rd edition, p. 126.

congregational Board can use them, or grant permission to use them, for any purpose without the minister's consent' (Act of Assembly, 1932, XVII).
3 'Such as are commonly called Elders labour not in the Word and Doctrine' (*Second Book of Discipline*, VII).

sentences and censures about Ministers, and such like. In short, the Elder is to speak nothing to the Church from the pulpit.'¹

THE DIACONATE

'The Scripture doth hold out Deacons as distinct officers in the Church. Whose office is perpetual. To whose office it belongs not to preach the Word or administer the Sacraments, but to take special care in distributing to the necessities of the poor.'²

While the Standards of the Church of Scotland recognize that the Deacon had a wider function in the Early Church, his duties at the Reformation were nevertheless restricted mainly to the administration of the Church finances and the care of the poor, but he might assist at Holy Communion. 'They may be employed to provide the Elements, to carry them, and serve the communicants at the Lord's

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The position of the Diaconate in the Church of Scotland must be called anomalous and unsatisfactory.

Universally recognised² as of Apostolic ordinance and as an order of Ministry, it is left in practical abeyance. In the earlier centuries a permanent ministry of large scope and weighty influence, the Diaconate had in the Mediaeval Church become no more than a step towards the presbyterate. The somewhat halfhearted attempts of Reformers, in the sixteenth century or later, to restore its Scriptural place and primitive efficiency in the

Table.'3 The Deacon was virtually an assistant elder, and might attend the Kirk Sessions, but only in a consultative capacity. It was because his functions were included in those of the elder that the deacon tended to disappear from the church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴ In many churches today deacons have returned to occupy the position of assistants to the Kirk Session. In earlier times they were admitted in the same way as elders,⁵ 'solemnly received with lifted up hands, giving their promises to be faithful'.⁶ Today they are either elected for life and 'ordained', and admitted by the Kirk Sessions to their office, or they are elected for a term of years but are not 'ordained', for the purpose of administering the temporal affairs of the congregation. They do not assist at Holy Communion and have no spiritual jurisdiction.⁷

1 Collections, I. vi. 7-8. See also G. Gillespie, *Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland in Points of Ruling-Elders, and of the authority of Presbyteries and Synods* (1641), II; Mair, *Digest of Church Laws*, 3rd edition, p. 126; also in J. T. Cox, op. cit.; C. L. Warr, *The Presbyterian Tradition* (Maclehose, 1933), pp. 372-4. An elder . . . cannot possibly entertain a valid intention to convey to another that divine commission which he himself does not possess.'

2 Form of Church Government, 'Deacons'.

Church's system have failed. Its functions have been largely absorbed by the lay Eldership, or are remitted to officials appointed *ad hoc*.¹

3 Steuart of Pardovan, *Collections*, I. viii.

3.

4 See Steuart of Pardovan, op. cit., I. viii.

1.

5 *Acts of Assembly*, 1582, Session 12.

6 Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, I. ii, pp. 14f.

7 Cox, *Practice and Procedure of the Church of Scotland*, pp. 29ff., r2sff.

1 Form of Church Government, 'Deacons.'

2 At the Reformation 'the only orders recognised were two, those of Presbyter or Minister and the Deacon.' (Story, *Apostolic Ministry in the Church of Scotland*, p. 249.)

1 In a few parishes 'deacons' appear to exist and to occupy the position of assistants to the Kirk Session, at whose meetings they may be present, but without membership of the Court. They are chosen by the Session, and are publicly admitted to office with prayer, without imposition of hands.

ORDER

The Church of Jesus Christ is ordered from beyond its empirical being and existence by the power of the Word of God. By that Word it is called and formed to be the community in the midst of the world which is given to share already in the new creation and its new order through the Communion of the Spirit. But this Church is sent by Christ to live its life and fulfil its mission in the midst of a divided and disordered world, both by proclaiming the Gospel of reconciliation and by living it out in a reconciled life. It belongs to the very nature of this Church to manifest the unity of the Triune God in the inner unity of its faith and life in the Spirit, but also to translate that unity into its outward behaviour within temporal and physical existence. It is in and through this reconciliation of its outward life in the world with its inner life in Christ that the Church fulfils its holy ministry in the Gospel. Order is therefore the form that the life of the Church takes in its conformity to Christ through His Word and Spirit, and in obedient fulfilment of its mission of reconciliation. True order in the Church of Christ is order that points above and beyond its historical forms to the new divine order in Christ, and points beyond its present forms to the

future manifestation of its order in the new creation. Actual order in the Church throughout its historical pilgrimage is thus ambivalent and provisional. It is order that derives from beyond itself and order that exercises a provisional service in history until Christ comes again. That is the doctrine that lay behind the reforming and reordering of the Church of Scotland at the Reformation. As *The Second Book of Discipline* described it: This power ecclesiastical is an authority granted by God the Father, through the Mediator Jesus Christ, unto His Kirk gathered, and having its ground in the Word of God, to be put into execution by them unto whom the spiritual government of the Kirk by lawful calling is committed. The Polity of the Kirk flowing from this Power is an Order or Form of spiritual Government which is exercised by the members appointed thereunto by the Word of God. And therefore it is given immediately to the Office-bearers by whom it is exercised to the wellbeing of the whole Body. . . . Therefore this Power and Polity of the Kirk should lean upon the Word of God immediately as the only ground thereof, and should be taken from the pure fountain of the Scriptures, the Kirk hearing the Voice of Christ, the only Spiritual King, and being ruled by His Laws.¹ Church Order has therefore a permanent and stable element that derives directly from the Word and its ordering of the life of the Church through the ministry, but because this ordering of the life of the Church has to be carried out within the conditions of our erring and sinful world it cannot but partake of sin and error, it also has a variable element liable to error. Therefore it must ever be renewed and reformed by reference back to the creative Word of God. And so the *Scots Confession* of 1560, which represents the first attempt to restore to the Church an order in its faith and life in obedient conformity to

Christ and His Word, acknowledged that no 'Order and Polity in *Ceremonies*' can be appointed for all ages, times and places.² In other words, the Church has a variable element in its order and polity that must constantly be checked and be re-adapted in fulfilment of the mission of the Church.³ Therefore the Confession contained the following words in its preface: . . . Protesting that if any man will note in this our Confession any article or sentence repugnant to God's Holy Word, that it would please him of his gentleness and for Christian charity's sake to admonish us of the same in writing; and we upon our honours and fidelity, by God's Grace do promise unto him satisfaction from the Mouth of God, that is from His Holy Scriptures, or else reformation of that which shall prove to be amiss.⁴ It is in that sense that the Church of Scotland claims to be a Reformed Church, *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda*. It is in that very spirit also that the Church of Scotland framed and adopted the *Ecumenical Statement* of 1954, as a clear indication of its future relations with other Churches in the mission of the One Lord and His Gospel of Reconciliation.

The Church of Scotland, believing in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and acknowledging one Baptism for the remission of sins, affirms its intention of seeking closer relations with every other Church

¹ I. ii. 3, 7.

² Art. xx.

³ The Church's deep sense of its mission is indicated by the printing of the following words from Matt. xxiv. 14 on the title-page of the first printed edition of the Confession: And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached throughout the whole world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.'

⁴ Ed. by G. D. Henderson, p. 41.

with which it stands in fundamental doctrinal agreement, but from which it is separated in matters of government and the ordering of the ministry. In its approach to other Churches in which it discerns the one Body of Christ, the Church of Scotland would desire to look beyond the divisions of history to the ultimate fulness and unity of the Church's life in Christ, and to affirm its readiness to consider how the contributions of all such Churches may be embraced within that unity and fulness, always, however, in agreement with the Word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. In such approaches the Church of Scotland would seek to join, humbly and penitently, with its sister Churches in fulfilment of the Lord's prayer that all who believe in Him might be one.

NOTE

Bishop Gore has an **interesting** passage (*Church and Ministry*, pp. 62-4) in which he exalts 'the principle of apostolic succession above the question of the exact form of the ministry in which the principle has expressed itself'.

Monepiscopacy, he says, is rather the outcome of a principle than itself a principle. 'Nobody would maintain that the continuity of the Church would be broken if in any given diocese all the presbyters were consecrated to the Episcopal Office and governed as a co-ordinate College of Bishops without Presbyters or Presbyter-Bishops.... Something equivalent to this arrangement has been commonly believed in the West to have existed in the early-^Church.'¹ The belief referred to is of course that of, e.g., Lightfoot (*Dissertation* appended to his Commentary on Philippians), that a collegiate episcopate preceded a monarchical.² It is further, however, a belief that these colleges were composed of *presbyters*. The term 'presbyter-bishop' is a

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BISHOP GORE has a valuable passage (*Church and Ministry* pp. 62-64) in which he exalts 'the principle of apostolic succession above the question of the exact form of the ministry in which the principle has expressed itself.' Mono-episcopacy, he says, is rather the outcome of a principle than itself a principle. 'Nobody would maintain that the continuity of the Church would be broken if in any given diocese all the

convenient invention of recent date. It occurs in no ancient

1 cf. also D. Stone, *Episcopacy and Valid Orders in the Primitive Church*, 1926, iiif: 'An episcopal succession in which there was a body of Presbyters who had received the episcopal power and authority, who for a time shared in the act of ordaining which was later restricted to one monarchical Bishop, would be, so far as the point of the maintenance of the succession is concerned, the same in principle as the rule of a single Bishop.'

2 This belief is still held by the great majority of scholars even in the Roman Church. It is also widely recognized that, after moniscopacy arose, in several important centres, such as Alexandria and Rome and Lyons, the bishop received only presbyteral consecration. See the discussions in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* by Einar Molland, 1950, vol. i, pp. 12-28; by W. Telfer, vol. iii, 1957, pp. 1 - 13 ; E. W. Kemp, 1955, vol. vi, pp. 125-42; K. J. Woolcombe, *The Historic Episcopate* (ed. by K. M. Carey), pp. 4iff.

authority. There is no ground for the implication that an *order* of presbyter-bishops distinct from presbyters ever existed. The fact, drily stated, is that in certain places—which constituted at the least a large proportion of those of which we have information presbyters are found exercising the oversight conjointly; nor is the

fact changed by referring to them as a 'plural episcopate'. They were presbyters forming a college or presbytery which exercised

government.¹ It is extremely difficult to see how such presbyteries or colleges differ in principle from those which were set up at the Reformation among ourselves,

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presbyters were consecrated to the Episcopal Office and governed as a coordinate College of Bishops without Presbyters or Presbyter-Bishops. . . . Something equivalent to this arrangement has been commonly believed in the West to have existed in the early Church.' The belief referred to is of course that of, *e.g.*, Lightfoot (*Dissertation* appended to his

Commentary on Philippians), that a collegiate episcopate preceded a monarchical.¹ It is further, however, a belief that these colleges were composed of *presbyters*. The term 'presbyter-bishop' is a convenient invention of recent date. It occurs in no ancient

1 The belief is so far assented to by Mr. Rawlinson (*C. M. Hist.*, p. 413) that he admits it to be 'probable that in a few localities there was at first something like a " plural Episcopate " —so much, he thinks, may be reasonably inferred as to Philippi and Corinth. But it may also be inferred as to Rome, Alexandria, and perhaps Ephesus (Acts xx. 17, 28); and the plurality contemplated is a plurality of Presbyters.

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'corporate episcopate' in which Presbyters exercise Episcopal office, partly conjointly in Presbytery and partly individually in their own parishes—ordination being severely restricted to the 'Presbytery as a whole' acting under the presidency of its Moderator.

Bishop Gore **acknowledged** that ordinary arrangements of the Ministry may be departed from (or at least that the violation is of secondary importance) if the principle of the Apostolic succession be not violated. The *principle* in question has not been violated—it has been most carefully conserved by us, and is maintained in our practice: of that there can hardly be dispute.² Gore, however, had this difficulty, that, if presbyters ever possessed and exercised in common the power to transmit Orders, this power had been lost to them and was not possessed by those presbyters who at and after the Reformation believed that they possessed and could validly exercise it. He thought that they assumed a function not committed to them—taking the honour to themselves.

I See the conclusions of J. Wordsworth (*The Ministry of Grace*, 1901, p. 142): 'A dispassionate study of the evidence leads us to these conclusions: (1) that the three orders of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, existed from the time of the Apostles, in certain parts of the Church, especially in Palestine, Syria and the Province of Asia; (2) that in some other parts, especially at Rome and Alexandria, there were at first only two orders, the governing order acting normally as a corporate body or college; (3) that in process of time, and more particularly in the course of the third century, the governing order tended more and more to act in the matter of ordination through its Presidents, although the right of the latter to act normally alone has never been regularly established except in Rome; (4) that in this way the governing order in

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Bishop Gore consents that ordinary arrangements of the Ministry may be departed from (or at least that the violation is of secondary importance) if the principle of the Apostolic succession be not violated. The *principle* in question has not been violated—it has been most carefully conserved by us, and is maintained in our practice : of that there can hardly be dispute.¹ **Dr.** Gore, however, has this difficulty, that, if presbyters ever possessed and exercised in common the power to transmit Orders, this power had been lost to them and was not possessed by those presbyters who at and after the Reformation believed that they possessed and could validly exercise it. He thinks that they assumed a function not committed to them—taking the honour to themselves.

the West has been differentiated into two degrees, though a tradition has always been kept up that they had an essential unity of character, now defined as 'Priesthood' or 'Sacerdotium'. These conclusions have recently been reaffirmed by E. W. Kemp after a careful review of the evidence and modern research, including the discussions of Gore, and Telfer, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1955. vi, pp. 125-42.

2 See *Reunion*, pp. 17-48, and Report in Macdonald Case, *Reports*, 1911.

This supposes that the nature of a Divine Ordinance can be altered by canon—which is an unsafe position. It is the position, e.g. of the Bull of Leo XIII, which rejected the Orders of the Church of England on the ground of the absence from the Anglican Ordinal of the *Traditio Instrumentorum*. The powers of an order of the Ministry, divinely instituted, are inherent in the institution of the order. The Church ministerially confers the order, and therewith all that the Lord has included in the commission of that order. Exercise may be restrained by canon, but power is not thereby taken away, and the necessity of circumstance may supersede canon. In the Scotland of the sixteenth century the existing 'arrangement in the ministry' had collapsed by the abdication or by the impossibility of the persons representing it, and the restraints which custom and regulation had laid on the fundamental ministry of the presbyterate might very well seem to be in suspense. In falling back upon the inherent and institutional capacities of that ministry for government and for propagation of orders, the *principle* of succession was not violated. That which Presbyters had received of the Lord they delivered to us. As for 'assuming' function or 'taking honour to themselves' in a manner morally discoloured by personal self-assertion,¹ it must be remembered that the doctrine of Jerome as to the fundamental identity of the orders of

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presbyter and bishop was the current doctrine of the Schools²—the Reformers were not the first to bring it up: they had learnt it in the Roman Communion,

found it widely attested in the Early Catholic Church,

and they applied it in good faith to the necessity in which they found the Church to stand: not taking honour to themselves in any self-assertive spirit, but rather confessing a responsibility which they believed to have been committed to them by the Head of the Church in their ordination.

1 Church and Ministry, p. 63; cf. 304.

2 The English Reformers accepted the doctrine as fully as others. Institution of a Christian Man (approved by Convocation, 1537): 'In the New

Testament there is no mention made of any degrees or distinction in orders, but only of deacons or ministers, and of Presbyters or Bishops'; and *The King's Book*, 1540, 'of these two orders only, priests and deacons, Scripture maketh express mention'. 'S. Hieronymi sententia universae ecclesiae Latinae acceptissima fuit

et immerito a multis theologis cum gravi censura repudiata: imprudentes enim cum S. Hieronymo universam prope ecclesiam Latinam condemnarunt.'

(Morinus, *de Sacr. Ordinatio*, pars. iii. ex. iii. 2, 19). For a review of the evidence see Robert Boyd of Trochrig, *In Epist. ad Ephesios Praelectiones*, 4. 11, pp. 499ff.; and John Forbes of Corse, *Instructiones Historico-Theologicae*, XVI. i.

The conception that an evolutionary office or 'arrangement of the Ministry' can by ecclesiastical authority or by prescription of usage attain to an obligatory relation to conscience or become necessary to validity, is perilous to others than Presbyterians. For on that ground it is difficult to see how the Roman obedience can be other than obligatory and

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In connexion with this whole Chapter, readers are also referred to the important Appendixes contained in the Report of the Panel on Doctrine submitted to the General Assembly of 1963, containing a Statement on the Christian Ministry, a Brief Statement on the Office of Elder in the Church of Scotland, and Questions at Licensing and Ordination (pp. 752-61).

Latinam condemnarunfc.' (Morinus, de Sacr. Ordinal., pars. iii. ox. iii, 2, 19, quoted by Gore, *C'hurch and Ministry*.)

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The interesting and illuminating treatment of the subjects, 'The Christian Ministry in the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic periods' and 'Apostolic Succession,' by Dr. Armitage Robinson and Mr. Turner in the *Essays on the Early History of the Church and Ministry*, which have appeared since the preceding pages were prepared for publication, does not seem to the writers to weaken the position as to Orders which they have endeavoured to commend.

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